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The eternal relation between the Father and the Son and its handling by selected patristic theologians, with particular reference to John's Gospel

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**THE ETERNAL RELATION BETWEEN THE FATHER
AND THE SON AND ITS HANDLING BY SELECTED
PATRISTIC THEOLOGIANs, WITH PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO JOHN'S GOSPEL**

by

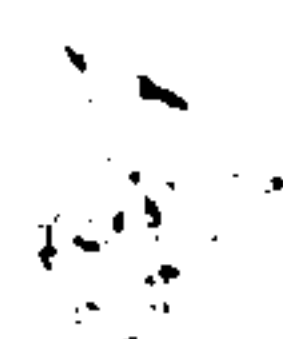
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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Two propositions meet in modern trinitarian debate. One, that ethical subordination of the Son to the Father in eternity is a modern innovation and tends to polytheism. Accordingly, Jesus' obedience is purely economic. The other, that the economic Trinity reveals the immanent Trinity. The question is: are both true?

The thesis examines questions of Greco-Roman monotheism, the trinitarian accounts of five Patristic theologians (Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers and Augustine), and material in John's Gospel, perennially a focal point for trinitarian debate.

It is argued that Jewish-biblical monotheism distinguishes the sovereign, uncreated creator, who must be worshipped in his revealed name, from dependent creation. This separates that tradition from monism, pantheism, polyonymous monotheism and from polytheisms envisaging gods as operating individually in independent, separate spheres, whether those spheres are defined geographically or functionally.

The review of Patristic theologians is necessary to ascertain whether the ethical subordination of the Son is indeed an innovation. The review discloses (despite significant instabilities in the positions of Tertullian and Origen, and, to some extent, Augustine) a common nexus of topics, described here in terms of filial derivation, inseparable persons, and inseparable operation. Filial derivation grounds both ontological equality of inseparable, distinguishable Persons and eternal relational

obedience. The economy of inseparable (but distinguishable) operations reveals this filiality, equality and obedience.

John's Gospel confirms these patterns, particularly by characterising the Father as supreme giver, to the Son in eternity and to the Son and believers in the economy. This giving motif portrays the Father as loving and as bearing an authority that the Son too obeys. The Father's giving in turn grounds the Son's own legitimacy as Lord, for the Son draws his authority from the Father's gift.

Accordingly, the proposition that the Son's eternal, ethical, subordination is a modern innovation and tends to polytheism is rejected in favour of the position that an ordered economic Trinity reveals an ordered immanent Trinity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Genesis Of The Thesis

This thesis is occasioned by the confluence of two streams in modern trinitarian thought. First, there is the contention of G. Bilezikian, amongst others, that the obedience of the Son (ethical subordination) seen in the Incarnation is only economic, not eternal,¹ and that contentions to the contrary are modern in origin.² Accordingly, the proposition that the Son is eternally equal to the Father in deity and essence but subordinate to the Father's authority is characterised as leading inevitably to Arianism and polytheism.³ Apart from anything else, arianising theologies readily leave the Father, who alone is 'truly' God, distanced and hidden from creation. Secondly, there is K. Rahner's dictum that the economic trinity is the immanent trinity and the immanent trinity is the economic trinity.⁴ While the extent of identification between economic and immanent has been debated,⁵ the revelatory value of the economy remains common ground. It is just there, of course, that possible friction between the claim of ethical eternal egalitarianism and Rahner's dictum arises. Is it possible to envisage the Son's obedience as purely economic, without jeopardising the revelation of the immanent by the economy?

¹ Bilezikian 1997:59f.

² Bilezikian 1997:57, 60.

³ Bilezikian 1997:64 and 66, where he characterises the position as leaving the Son as 'the lower god in an Olympian hierarchy'.

⁴ Rahner 1970:22.

⁵ Some, e.g. C. La Cugna would develop this further, arguing there is no immanent trinity 'beyond' the economic. She writes 'there is neither an economic nor an immanent Trinity; there is only the *oikonomia* that is the concrete realisation of the mystery of *theologia* in time, space, history and personality.' (La Cugna 1991:223). Others, e.g. Y. Congar 1983:13f, caution against taking the statement '...the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity' as allowing the immanent to be subsumed by the economic.

1.2. The Importance Of This Inquiry

Two features suggest the importance of this question. Bilezikian rightly sees that it pertains generally to the relations between the Father and Son,⁶ but for T. Smail it is this relationship that is ‘at the very heart of the Gospel’, which sets out how humans may relate to God.⁷ The Father-Son relation, then, has implications for the relations humans have with the triune God. Others, like J. Moltmann, would add that it is this relationship that so signally governs relationships humans have with each other, within the state, the church and the family, and can be used, wrongly in Moltmann’s view, to legitimate ‘monarchical’ and ‘patriarchal’ rule.⁸

The question therefore bears on a matter of considerable cultural significance: to what extent, and how, authority can be legitimated. Put sharply, Smail sees the remedy for authoritarianism lying in ‘the rediscovery of divine authority’,⁹ rooted in the Father as the source of all authority,¹⁰ a strongly patrocentric view, while Moltmann and others tend to disjoin love from authority.¹¹ On that view, Smail’s conception of divine relations would actually constitute part of the authoritarian problem.¹²

⁶ Bilezikian 1997:58.

⁷ Smail 1990:9.

⁸ E.g. Moltmann 1991:2, 4.

⁹ Smail 1990:17.

¹⁰ Smail 1990:16.

¹¹ E.g. Moltmann 1991:11f draws this from his understanding of NT ‘Abba’ language. In a similar vein, members of the ‘Open Theism’ school argue for the primacy of God’s love as parent/father over his will: e.g. R. Rice 1994:15f and C. Pinnock 1994:103.

¹² Admittedly part of the issue here is different conceptions of ‘authoritarianism’.

1.3. Background Features

Two other relatively influential perceptions need to be borne in mind. First, the view is held that western trinitarian thought took a wrong turn with Augustine. This has been variously put,¹³ but an important feature is the idea that with Augustine the west became increasingly wedded to seeing the works of the Trinity *ad extra* as undivided or indivisible.¹⁴ For Rahner, this can only render trinitarian distinctions of Persons irrelevant to human beings,¹⁵ because the work of the Persons becomes so identified in the economy that they cannot be distinguished in the economy. There is an implicit break between economic and immanent. Again, a feature of this is that the Father in particular, perhaps, tends to recede from view. This bears on the present inquiry because Rahner's dictum suggests one needs to provide some account of divine operation in the world that is neither polytheistic nor, as it were, personally monistic but which discloses the personal relations. Key questions are, then, how do the patristic theologians (including Augustine) integrate the Persons in their divine actions in the economy, and how does their source material in the Scriptures do this?

A second related perception is that western trinitarian thought, again influenced by Augustine, tends to separate trinitarian questions from other issues relating to the doctrine of God: *de deo uno* is severed largely from *de deo trino*.¹⁶ This impoverishes both,¹⁷ raising the possibility that accounts of the filial relation (plausibly part of *de deo trino*) are inadequate without proper integration with *de deo uno*.

¹³ See the review in chapter 7 below.

¹⁴ Rahner 1970:13f and Moltmann 1981:93, 98f,108f

¹⁵ Rahner 1970:14.

¹⁶ Rahner 1970:17.

1.4. The Scope Of Inquiry

Therefore this inquiry requires several different foci. The charge of Arianism includes a charge of polytheism, and thus raises the question of what constitutes in orthodox theology authentic monotheism as against polytheism. Further, that charge is related to a charge of innovation, and accordingly a historical focus is required. In particular, was Nicene Trinitarian theology committed to ethical as well as essential egalitarianism in its anti-Arian programme? Lastly, does the data of the economy given in Scripture, on which the Fathers claimed to rely, support an ethically ordered or egalitarian eternal Trinity, or neither?

In this way, the confluence of Rahner's dictum and the ethical egalitarian argument creates a somewhat novel network of questions, in which systematic considerations of monotheism/polytheism, historical considerations of patristic theology, and exegetical considerations all intertwine. The novelty of this network means that a conventional literature review of earlier dealings with the issue is not possible. Obviously there is enormous and fruitful literature bearing on certain particular aspects of this network, but less so for their synthesis. Accordingly literature is reviewed at particular points on particular topics, notably the criticisms of Origen in chapter 4 and of Augustine in chapter 7. The methodological commitment here is to analyse primary literature, both patristic and biblical (the later focussing on John's Gospel), with a view to the three foci outlined.

¹⁷ Rahner 1970:17ff.

The thesis reflects these three foci as follows. Chapter 2 deals with issues of monotheism and chapters 3-7 with Tertullian, Origen, Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers and Augustine, who between them provide samples^{of} trinitarian thought before, during and after the classic Nicene period.¹⁸ Consideration usefully starts with Tertullian and Origen as highly influential pre-Nicene theologians. Athanasius and Hilary both are in the thick of the Arian controversy, albeit at different stages and locations. Augustine merits inclusion both because he is not infrequently cast as somewhat at odds with Nicene thought and because he was expressly faced with the argument from Homoian theologians that the Son's obedience in the Incarnation showed exactly his inferiority ontologically to the Father. This argument bears strong similarities to the contemporary argument that eternal ethical subordination entails ontological inferiority. If it is correct that Nicene trinitarian theology must see ethical subordination as arianising, one might plausibly expect to find traces of that position in such supporters of Nicaea as Hilary, Athanasius or Augustine.

The examination of these theologians has been cast both so as to try to consider accounts of divine operation and also to meet Rahner's observation that trinitarian theology must not be separated from theology more generally. Accordingly, the aim is to present these accounts of the Trinity within the overall context of a theologian's system: *de deo uno* is not to be separated from *de deo trino*. Chapter 8 turns to the data of the economy as given in John's Gospel,¹⁹ because it is here that these five patristic theologians stand or fall according to their own methodological commitments. Chapter 9 provides conclusions.

¹⁸ This period is critical to this debate, because of the argument that eternal ethical subordination is arianising.

With this in mind, we turn to the question of monotheism.

¹⁹ Referred to here as ‘John’, not to prejudice questions of authorship but for convenience.

CHAPTER 2: MONOTHEISM AND MONOTHEISMS

It is proposed that:

2(a). The most prominent varieties of 'monotheism' in the Greco-Roman world tended to take monistic or polyonymous monotheistic forms.

2(b). Jewish-biblical monotheism stands apart from monistic thought because it sharply distinguishes between the uncreated creator and the created cosmos.

2(c). Jewish-biblical monotheism stands apart from polyonymous monotheism because worship must be in the revealed name.

2(d). The pattern of divine operation in Jewish-biblical monotheism is based on God's cosmic sovereignty, and differs from patterns of polytheistic operation predicated on the distinct and separate spheres of activity of divine beings, or their distinct localities.

2(e). Jesus is intelligibly cast as divine within this Jewish-biblical monotheism since he is depicted as creator and sovereign and pre-existent.

2.1. Definitions Of Monotheism

Ulrich Mauser comments:

We talk of monotheism and regard it as a basis shared not only by all Christian denominations, but also with several non-Christian religions such as Judaism and Islam.¹

However, he continues, such agreement on what monotheism means is ‘manifest only on the surface,’ whereas in reality there are ‘vast differences’ of understanding.² These differences require exploration, both to clarify what version of monotheism Christian theologians thought they were defending, and also to evaluate charges that the Fathers drew too heavily on Greco-Roman thought.

Some definitions start by negating any god other than the one affirmed by the monotheism in question,³ notably at the level of existence: no other gods exist. But, as M. West notes,⁴ this leaves the issue unresolved since the notion of ‘god’ itself remains undefined. Moreover, it is unclear that what is negated need be existence rather than some other quality or attribute. This opens up the possibility of varieties of monotheism.⁵ This is reflected in discussions such as G. Fowden’s,⁶ who initially defines monotheism as ‘belief in one unique god to the exclusion of all others’ but then rightly immediately qualifies this in view of angels and other entities.⁷

¹ Mauser 1991:257.

² Mauser 1991:257. Similarly, P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede caution against ‘simplistic’ concepts of monotheism: 1999:2.

³ Mauser 1991:257 fn. 2. West also comments on this ‘standard’ species of definition: West 1999:21.

⁴ West 1999:21.

⁵ Implicitly recognised in OT scholarship’s perceived need to use terms like ‘henotheism’.

⁶ Fowden 1993:5.

⁷ Fowden 1993:5 quotes W.E. Gladstone on henotheism: ‘affirmative belief in one god without the sharply-defined exclusive line which makes it a belief in him as the only god.’ But again, what is ‘god’?

Terms qualifying particular monotheisms such as ‘inclusive’, ‘exclusive’, ‘broad’ or ‘narrow’ rightly recognise there may be a spectrum of monotheistic positions, but risk imposing the observer’s evaluations of what constitutes desirable monotheism, evident in terminology such as ‘pure’ as opposed to ‘impure’ or ‘nascent’ monotheism.⁸ Such evaluations, of course, could obscure what the practitioner of a particular monotheism considers defining features. Hence Mauser and also Athanassiadi and Frede insist a monotheism must be examined on its own terms.⁹

However, some taxonomy of monotheisms remains analytically useful. The factor adopted here as an underlying feature of monotheisms is uniqueness,¹⁰ *monos* as one of a kind. Uniqueness, though, implies that others are excluded from participating in that unique factor, or factors. Concentrating on uniqueness or exclusivity permits analysis of what the monotheism itself considers the decisive factor excluding others, thereby facilitating examination of the monotheism on its own terms. This is especially important, of course, in the present case, since a basic task is to see how the Fathers examined here think their versions of monotheism are compatible with plurality, rather than imposing an alien monotheism and measuring them against that. Tertullian, for example, emphasised there could be a wrong kind of monotheism.

⁸ R. Brague 1983:150f notes both the habitual assumption that monotheism is superior, and the reaction that monotheism is undesirable and totalitarian.

⁹ Mauser 1991:257; Athanassiadi and Frede 1999:2.

¹⁰ Cp. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1985 26:599.

Given this, it is proposed to examine the uniqueness or exclusivity of various monotheisms with respect to:

1. the existence of other beings

Uniqueness may consist not so much in an entity being the only entity of a particular kind which exists, but rather in being the only entity existing in a particular way.

2. the entitlement to worship

L. Hurtado and R. Bauckham and others¹¹ have underlined the importance of this category with their insistence that worship is a crucial indicator of what Second Temple Judaism considered decisive.

3. relationship to the world

Here the emphasis falls on what may be exclusive to the entity in its relation to the cosmos.

2.2. Species Of Monotheism In The Ancient World

For simplicity, ancient monotheisms will be explored under the broad headings of Pagan and Jewish-biblical monotheisms. Naturally, this distinction should not be taken as precluding all commonality between Pagan and Jewish-biblical thinking (Philo could readily exemplify just that), but rather as attempting to reflect the bible's importance for a particular range of monotheistic views.

¹¹ Hurtado 1988, Bauckham 1998.

2.3. Pagan Versions Of Monotheism

2.3.1. *Philosophical Monotheisms*

Plato is obviously a dominating figure in classical Greek philosophy, whose positions also have significant religious implications.¹² Consideration of Plato's own religious philosophy can usefully start with the late dialogue, the *Timaeus*,¹³ and its highly influential cosmogony. The visible world is created (28), fashioned consciously as a copy of an eternal pattern (28-29) by a distinct entity, the Demiurge or God, who wishes (29-30) that everything should resemble him in his perfection as far as possible. Accordingly, the 'visible sphere', which the Demiurge found in disorder, was brought to order (30). Other gods, including the traditional gods of Greek mythology, are themselves created beings (40-41).

To what extent is this monotheistic? Obviously the title 'god' applies to others than the Demiurge (the other 'gods' at 40-41). The Demiurge differs, though, in being neither made nor formed. However, the eternal archetype and unformed matter also are not made but pre-exist. There seems to be no eternal network of correlative relationship between these entities in which each is what it is in relation to the others. What distinguishes the Demiurge is his response to the disorganised state of matter. The Demiurge reflects on things beyond himself and acts. Thus, the Demiurge's uniqueness lies in a complex of factors, both his unformed-ness and his capacity for action and reflection.

¹² Plato does not spring forth already fully grown, but inherits both problems and possibilities from, amongst others, Heraclitus and the Ionians, Parmenides and the Pythagoreans. See further Appendix 1.1.

As regards being worshipped, Plato does not in the *Timaeus* apparently regard this as the exclusive prerogative of the Demiurge, although he might, no doubt, wish the popular cults to be purged of excesses.

Moving, then, to the third area, relationship to other beings, the Demiurge forms the cosmos, but does not create it *ex nihilo*. Moreover, he is not the only one who forms, for the gods also ‘form’ (they form mortal beings: 41-43). The Demiurge has other relationships than ‘former’ and ‘formed’. He has not formed the eternal archetype but appreciates its perfection, and is not, it seems, its master. This would follow from its eternally unchanging status.

In short, then, Plato’s Demiurge is unique in some respects and to that extent this scheme could be termed ‘monotheist’, but this uniqueness lies neither in being the only eternal entity, nor in exclusive entitlement to worship. This is of considerable importance when considering patristic monotheism.

Aristotle’s relations to Plato are complex, but interesting common ground exists theologically. Both reject the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* and postulate a God who is crucial for the order of the cosmos. But differences then appear. J. Hankinson comments that for Aristotle ‘God is neither the creator of that order, nor its continuing efficient cause.’¹⁴ ‘God’ is rather an unmoved mover by being the *object* of desire and thought for other entities,¹⁵ thus providing a ‘non-intentional teleology’.¹⁶

¹³ Taking the conventional view of *The Timaeus*: for discussion, see R. Kraut 1992:15ff.

¹⁴ Hankinson 1995:127.

In terms of Aristotle *qua* monotheist, the uniqueness of an Aristotelian supreme unmoved mover lies in its complete actuality. Eternality is present insofar as the unmoved mover is always unmoved. Yet in one sense other entities also possess eternity, for with Aristotle there is no *creatio ex nihilo*.

With respect to worship, F. Copleston argues the unmoved mover cannot be worshipped.¹⁷ A rationale lies in *Magna Moralia* 1208b27-36. Here Aristotle comments that friendship for God and ‘soul-less’ things [τὰ ἄψυχα] is impossible, for neither class can reciprocate friendship [τὸ ἀντιφιλεῖσθαι] and such reciprocity is necessary for friendship. This is consistent with Aristotle’s view that the unmoved mover is ‘thought thinking itself’. Yet one cannot intentionally respond to a personal overture without thinking of the other. Hence, unless worship can properly take place where the object worshipped is oblivious to it, this view also excludes worship.

In terms of the third category, relation to others, since this God’s relationship with other entities is non-intentional,¹⁸ he could only with difficulty be seen as exercising sovereignty, for that would normally imply intentionality.

Seen thus, Aristotle seems problematic as a monotheist. The pure actuality of his unmoved mover stands out as a quality, but it is questionable whether it is a highly important part of his own system that this pure actuality be the exclusive prerogative of one being.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Met.A* vii. 1072a25.

¹⁶ Hankinson 1995:128. See further Appendix 1.2.

¹⁷ Copleston 1947 I:317.

¹⁸ Hankinson 1995:128.

¹⁹ For ‘other gods’ in Aristotle, see Appendix 1.2

Stoics, claims Diogenes Laertius, hold that the universe has two principles, one active and one passive: ‘The passive is unqualified reality or matter; the active is the reason inherent in the matter or God.’²⁰ But this duality is not perhaps final, for the cosmos in its order emerges from the combination of the two principles, suggesting resolution into an underlying unity.²¹ Matter has four primary elements (earth, water, air, fire), among which fire is the final category.²² *Logos*, of course, is immanently present throughout, and informs the unfolding cosmos as *logoi spermatikoi*.²³

Cosmology thus readily weds theology. Augustine comments of fire:²⁴

Stoici ignem,... unum ex his quattuor elementis, et viventem et sapientem et ipsius mundi fabricatorem..., eumque omnino ignem deum esse putaverunt.

This fits neatly with a common Stoic definition of ‘god’, cited by E. Arnold from Aetius:²⁵ ‘a rational [νοερὸν] and fiery [πυρῶδες] spirit, having no shape, but changing to what it wills and made like to all things’.

Aetius highlights the ability to metamorphose, which reflects a particular Stoic theme, that God has many names.²⁶ Thus Cleanthes’ hymn to Zeus runs:

O God most glorious, called by many a name [πολυώνυμε],
Nature’s great King, through endless years the same;
Omnipotence, who by thy just decree
Controllest all, hail, Zeus, for unto thee
Behoves thy creatures in all lands to call.

²⁰ Compare e.g. Frede 1999:51.

²¹ Arnold 1911:156f comments that apparently dualistic statements are finally ‘subordinated to monistic statements’ in Stoic literature.

²² Copleston 1947 I:387f sees Heraclitus’ influence here, but it also modifies Heraclitus’ position.

²³ Athenagoras *Plea* 6 describes stoicism as an immanent monotheism.

²⁴ Augustine *De Civitate Dei* Bk 8.5.

²⁵ Arnold 1911:222, citing Aetius *Placita Philosophiae* I.6.1.

²⁶ Arnold 1911:220f.

The hymn, then, suggests that Stoicism endorsed ‘one intelligent being which governs the world’²⁷ Virgil famously captures this: ‘Mind enlivens the whole mass’.²⁸ ‘Polyonymous’ monotheism also apparently permits full participation in apparently polytheistic cults on the basis that each manifests the one metamorphosing God.²⁹ Moreover, some rationale for these polyonymous operations occurs in Servius:³⁰

Stoici dicunt non esse nisi unum deum et unam eandemque potestatem, quae *pro ratione officiorum* [emphasis added] variis nominibus appellatur.

The one God is variously manifested for different functions and the choice of a particular mode of manifestation might suggest that that form should continue to be observed religiously.

It is perhaps overstatement to say that matter and God are completely interchangeable. Yet they cannot be readily separated. Moreover, although the periodic conflagrations do not annihilate matter but reduce it to fire, the primary element, only God is eternal in the sense of retaining personal continuity throughout the conflagrations. To that extent, Frede rightly comments: ‘It alone is eternal’.³¹

Turning to worship, while Cleanthes’ hymn demonstrates a sense of personal intimacy, nevertheless, given Stoic cosmology and God’s metamorphosing, polyonymous, quality, all worship apparently reduces to worshipping the one, in some ways hidden, God.

²⁷ Frede 1999b:52. In the ancient world, e.g. Athenagoras *Plea* 6 also reaches this conclusion.

²⁸ *Aeneid* bk 6 ll. 726f: *mens agitat molem*...

²⁹ Stoicism was not an uncritical observer of polytheistic practice: see Arnold 1911:233-237.

³⁰ *Ad Verg. Georg.* I.5 quoted by Arnold 1911:221 fn 25.

³¹ Frede 1999b:52.

As regards relationship with other beings, naturally this attenuates the more one stresses the underlying monism: this can reduce to the cosmos relating to itself. Even so, the *Logos* appears as a creator in shaping or framing the world and indeed influencing rational creatures. Again, Cleanthes' hymn emphasises God's kingly aspect, and his ubiquitous cosmic sovereignty.

Plotinus (204-270 A.D.), the heir and successor of Middle Platonism,³² superficially has a triad resembling the Middle Platonist Albinus', in ascending order, Soul, Mind and the One. For Plotinus, Soul is 'the author of all living things' who 'has breathed life into them all'.³³ Soul, however, has an 'upward neighbour', whose image it is and which it contemplates, Mind.³⁴ In considering Mind, Plotinus invites us to see, platonisingly, an Ideal, but (crucially) multiple, realm.³⁵ Beyond Mind, we can infer at another level of being, a unity which precedes multiplicity,³⁶ Plotinus' One.³⁷

In this network, emanation is without diminution, and what emanates looks back to or contemplates its source.³⁸ Furthermore, emanation approaches, but is not quite, identity: 'nothing separates them but the fact that they are not one and the same, that there is succession...'³⁹ This account is significant since Tertullian, Athanasius,

³² For a brief account of some Middle Platonists relating to monotheism, see Appendix 1.3.

³³ *Enneads* V.1.2.

³⁴ *Enneads* V.1.3.

³⁵ *Enneads* V.1.4.

³⁶ *Enneads* V.1.4 & 5.

³⁷ On Plotinus and the One, see Appendix 1.4.

³⁸ *Enneads* V.1.3. when dealing with Soul contemplating Mind. Failure to look to one's source is apparently part of Plotinus' account of human alienation in the cosmos: *Enneads* V.1.1. J. Dillon 1991:xci prefers the term 'illumination' to 'emanation', since the latter may introduce Stoic connotations. 'Illumination' is closer to the light imagery.

³⁹ *Enneads* V.1.3.

Hilary and sometimes Augustine use similar imagery in portraying the Son's relationship to the Father, notably that of light, or sunbeam from the sun.⁴⁰

Is Plotinus simply a monist? He writes:

The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not all things; and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense - all things having run back to it: or, more correctly, not all as yet are within it, they will be.⁴¹

This is clearly not straightforward monism, nor essentially Parmenidean monism, where differentiation is illusory. For, some distinctions seem to exist between the three *hypostaseis*, as well as between Soul and the world. Plotinus' trajectory nevertheless seems monistic, to re-direct us back to our source, to the god within.

The distinction, though, is not that of personal relation. The One appears beyond even self-contemplation,⁴² rendering knowing relation with others highly problematic. Certainly each *hypostasis* is unique by virtue of its position in the hierarchy, although the One clearly stands apart, for it alone is beyond Being, even though it is the generator of Being,⁴³ and it alone seems entirely self-subsistent and simple.

Is this, then, a 'true' monotheism? For Frede, Plotinus has first, second and third gods.⁴⁴ But this must be handled carefully, as Frede later explains:

The second god, very roughly put, is simply the first god who in himself is beyond being and intelligibility, but reveals himself at the level of being and thinking as the divine intellect.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ E.g. *Against Praxeas*. Compare *Against Noetus*. 11.1.

⁴¹ *Enneads* V.2.1.

⁴² *Enneads* V.3.13, 3.10. It would imply a duality of knower and known, contrary to the One's simplicity.

⁴³ *Enneads* V.2.1.

⁴⁴ Frede 1999b:54.

⁴⁵ Frede 1999b:54.

This raises the issue whether monist tendencies do not ultimately so prevail as to entail that all things are finally aspects of the One (Compare Stoicism's polyonymous monotheism). Polyonymous streams are present in Plotinus's thinking. Subordinate deities are in some sense endorsed as discrete individuals yet also as sharing one existence:

More truly this is the one God [sc Mind] who is all the gods; for, in the coming to be of all those, this, the one, has suffered no diminishing. He and all have one existence, while each again is distinct. It is distinction by state without interval: there is no outward form to set one here and another there and to prevent any being an entire identity; yet there is no sharing of parts from one to another. Nor is each of these divine wholes a power in fragment, a power totalling to the sum of the measurable segments: and so great is God that his very members are infinites.⁴⁶

Since entities have attention directed primarily upwards, conscious sovereign control of the world is not strongly marked here. Nor is sovereignty based on creating *ex nihilo*. Worship, judging by Augustine, is not restricted to the One.⁴⁷ The One might be the logical destination of worship, but apparently must remain oblivious.

This is not an exhaustive account of Greco-Roman philosophical theology, but other schools perhaps bear less closely on monotheism. It is worth noting that Epicureanism would tend either to regard the gods as completely separate from the world, or non-existent, while Pyrrhonian skepticism would methodologically have been committed to agnosticism. The aim, according to Sextus Empiricus is ἀταραξία through ἐποχή, and thus the 'dogmatism' implied by religious belief seems precluded: for one must cease any dogmatising.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Enneads* V.5.5²

⁴⁷ *De Civitate Dei* Bk 8. 12.

2.3.2. *Pagan Religious Monotheisms*

Clearly ‘religion’ and ‘philosophy’ cannot necessarily be treated as hermetically separated categories, for some philosophers participated in the cults.⁴⁹ Nevertheless there is some virtue in treating the two distinctly, not least because of the distaste evident in philosophical circles, going back at least to Plato, for some species of popular religion, and clearly the relationship of philosophy and religion could be fraught, as the indictment against Socrates indicates.

Consideration of Greco-Roman religious monotheisms appropriately starts with the polytheism from which they developed. Homer and Hesiod depict gods in mutual conflict, and also with distinct spheres of responsibility, something Augustine satirises extensively in *De Civitate Dei*. This pattern of distinct action merits comment.

First, the gods tend to be distinguished from each other by different functions. Secondly, actions by such gods are in principle discrete. West posits that in practice the gods were conceived of as acting singly in discrete areas.⁵⁰ Operation may be with others’ consent, but is not, in Augustine’s terms, inseparable. Thirdly, while some polytheism arguably stresses divine ties to localities,⁵¹ this does not necessarily remove polytheistic conflict,⁵² but tends to make it conflict between local deities, rather than between deities with different spheres of interest.⁵³ Again, though, divine

⁴⁸ Sextus Empiricus *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* I.12.

⁴⁹ E.g. the conduct of Marcus Aurelius and the observations of Augustine *De Civ. Dei* Bk 8.12.

⁵⁰ West 1999:22.

⁵¹ E.g. 1 Kgs 20:23 on the gods of the hills and 2 Kgs 17:26 and the concept of the god of the land. This does not mean local deities were unimportant in Greek and Roman polytheism.

⁵² See e.g. the taunts of the Rabshakeh 2 Kgs 18:33-35.

⁵³ E.g. the divine conflicts over the legitimacy of Orestes’ murder of his mother Clytemnestra.

action is not integrated in this version of polytheism. Fourthly, divine disorder may well not have been sensed at a popular level,⁵⁴ although the practice in incantation texts of invoking many names and deities suggests this could, perhaps, readily develop.⁵⁵

West suggests a process whereby early Greek polytheism gives place to a pantheon where one god comes to dominate (so-called ‘henotheism’), ruling other gods as well as humans.⁵⁶ This process could occur through the example of earthly monarchies as well as a putative divine council where one will comes to prevail. Here a monotheism may not explicitly deny other supernatural beings exist, but has a strongly-defined celestial hierarchy.

As well as this tendency within particular pantheons, different pantheons met each other in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. This, naturally, raises the question of assimilation between different pantheons. Greek polytheists appear readily to have ‘translated’ deities between different pantheons by reference to common functions.⁵⁷ Assimilation seems well-attested,⁵⁸ and it is worth asking how far syncretistic processes could go.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Note, for instance, Hesiod’s insistence on the rule of *Dike* in human affairs.

⁵⁵ See C. Arnold 1997:18 and 64 for the pervasiveness of ‘spiritual’ influences and the intensity of emotion they might evoke. Note too the prominence of apotropaic material.

⁵⁶ West 1999:23f. W.Robertson Smith 1995 suggests a slightly different dynamic for Assyrian and Babylonian polytheism, whereby local deities are gradually aggregated to form a list of deities in whose names the empire could act.

⁵⁷ J. Assmann 1997:2f; Robertson Smith 1995:60.

⁵⁸ See J. Ferguson’s examples. 1970:211-220.

⁵⁹ I. Levinskaya 1996:197-203 cautions against too facile a use of ‘syncretism’ as an explanatory concept, for in fact it is used to describe different processes of interaction between religions.

Here we return to polyonymous monotheism, which could represent assimilation on two levels, between characters from different pantheons with the same function, and between different characters within the same pantheon with different functions. Three examples are worth noting.

First, there is Cleanthes' hymn to Zeus, already cited. This speaks, of course, of the universal reign of Zeus, who bears many names. Cleanthes, though, clothes his thought in the garb of existing religious categories. In addition, this Zeus does not exclude the existence of other gods necessarily, but those gods themselves are under Zeus' reign and are thereby diminished.⁶⁰

A second example is Isis in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*. Isis is described both in Lucius's prayer and also designates herself in her theophany. Lucius recounts:

...I offered this prayer to the supreme Goddess: 'Blessed Queen of Heaven, whether you are pleased to be known as Ceres....; or whether as celestial Venus....; or whether as Artemis....; or whether as dread Proserpine to whom the owl cries at night...'

The one goddess has many names. Moreover, polyonymous identification occurs here between members of a particular pantheon, for Ceres, Artemis, and Proserpine all belong to the conventional Greek pantheon. Thus the principle of different gods for different functions evaporates. Divine action is the single operation of one Person, not the inseparable operation of several, nor the separable operation of several. It is especially piquant given the thought of Tertullian's opponent, Praxeas, that strictly Ceres and Proserpine are mother and daughter, for Praxeas maintains that the same person can indeed be parent and child. Finally, this also represents

⁶⁰ Supporting the contentions of West 1999:24.

polyonymous identification across pantheons. Lucius prays to 'Isis', who is not an original member of the Olympian cast.

Turning, then, to Isis' theophany, she says:

I am Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, queen of the dead, queen also of the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are... Though I am worshipped in many aspects, known by countless names, and propitiated with all manner of different rites, yet the whole round earth venerates me...[she then gives examples of different names amongst different peoples] [The] Egyptians...call me by my true name, namely, Queen Isis.

Isis appears here as the single divine principle of the cosmos. Other divinities ultimately reduce to her. Different modes of worship seem not to affront her, although she hints that the Egyptian method is superior.⁶¹ There is, then, a nuanced polyonymous monotheism: Isis has a true name, and a true cult. Moreover, sovereignty language features strongly: Isis is every inch a queen. Nevertheless, ambiguities remain in the *Golden Ass*. 'Fortune' is close to personification in the High Priest of Isis' response to Lucius, yet she is apparently at odds with Isis, as callous as Isis is kind. Is Fortune different from Isis or her malign aspect?⁶² Further, Lucius is subsequently initiated into the mysteries of Osiris, but the relation between Isis and Osiris remain relatively unspecified.

The third example is an oracular response of Apollo to the question 'Are you, or another, god?'⁶³ It runs:

Born of himself, untaught, motherless, immovable,
Not contained in a name, many-named, dwelling in fire,
This is God. We angels are but a particle of God.

⁶¹ Perhaps ensuring the prestige of the particular mystery cult.

⁶² See L. Martin 1987:20-22.

⁶³ Quoted by Athanassiadi and Frede 1999:17.

Stoic analogies readily spring to mind here given the stress on fire and the pantheistic tone of the last line.

These examples illustrate a polyonymous approach with three different original deities. Such a theological tool is attractive both philosophically (allowing resolution of the question of the One and the Many) and politically, given the Roman empire's religious multiplicity.⁶⁴ It also readily harmonises with Praxeas' presentation.

Two other systems can be mentioned here. The first is the cult of *Theos Hypsistos*. While Athanassiadi and Frede see this as essentially pagan monotheism,⁶⁵ Levinskaya argues convincingly that this cult at least substantially utilises Jewish ideas.⁶⁶ The data is certainly diverse,⁶⁷ but the more 'pagan' features (e.g. traces of polyonymous monotheism) and the more Jewish features (e.g. the frequently aniconic data) perhaps add little to the considerations dealt with under those separate headings.

The last cult, or family of cults, is Gnosticism. Generalisations about Gnosticism are difficult, but Dillon cautiously notes that, despite appearances, (gnostic systems feature bewildering arrays of supernatural characters at various levels of emanation), an underlying monism remains.⁶⁸ This judgement seems well-taken. Gnosticism, despite its variety, can be represented, *inter alia*, as 'a complex and

⁶⁴ Cp. M. Sordi 1986:87, 186.

⁶⁵ Athanassiadi and Frede 1999:17.

⁶⁶ Levinskaya 1996:95ff.

⁶⁷ See Appendix 1.5.

⁶⁸ Dillon 1999:78. Athanassiadi and Frede 1999:12-14 make similar points regarding the Hermetic literature and the Chaldaean Oracles.

distinctive myth of *origins* [emphasis added]⁶⁹ in which ultimately a unitary principle is the origin of all. Thus *The Secret Book according to John* states: 'The unit, since it is a unitary principle of rule, has nothing that presides over it',⁷⁰ which is beyond divinity, utterly complete, eternal and ineffable.⁷¹ It is, though, productive,⁷² for it produces entities from which ultimately the spiritual and material worlds spring.

Two things should be added. First, the language that the unit or monad is beyond divinity is striking. Secondly, given this, Dillon's further point again seems well-taken: 'The Gnostic first principle...is a far more transcendent and impersonal entity than the Jewish or Christian God.'⁷³ On such a view, relationship, including worship, with such a principle is highly problematic.

This survey of pagan monotheisms highlights:

1. The variety of monotheistic beliefs.
2. The prominence of polyonymous monotheism.
3. The importance of monistic thinking, which may erode absolute distinctions between God and other entities.

It is now time to examine the species of monotheism found inside the explicitly Jewish-biblical tradition.

⁶⁹ B. Layton 1987:9.

⁷⁰ *Secret Book according to John* 2:26.

⁷¹ *Secret Book* 2:36-3:17.

⁷² *Secret Book* 4:26 cf. 2:28.

⁷³ Dillon 1999:78f.

2.4. Jewish-Biblical Monotheism

A central conundrum for early church studies is how early Christians could maintain their self-image as biblical monotheists,⁷⁴ while reverencing Christ as they did.⁷⁵ What permitted this development, without, as far as Christians were concerned, clearly perceived contradiction?

Bauckham helpfully articulates two views about Jewish monotheism.⁷⁶ The first stresses a strict monotheism in which it was ‘impossible to attribute real divinity to any figure other than the one God’,⁷⁷ while the second, ‘revisionist’, way argues for intermediate categories between God and other entities.⁷⁸ However, both views must deal with what is distinctive about God (something remains distinctive about God in the second view). Methodologically, this should be determined not by alien priorities, but by the system’s own. This will be done under the broad headings used earlier.

2.4.1. *Uniqueness In Terms Of Being*

Fascinatingly, terms translatable in English as ‘god’ are not restricted to Yahweh.⁷⁹ Given this, some prefer to speak of Old Testament ‘henotheism’, in which ‘theoretical’ monotheism is not asserted: other ‘gods’ exist but cannot compete with

⁷⁴ Note Rev 22:8f which maintains the conventional Jewish prohibition on worshipping anything but God.

⁷⁵ E.g. Pliny’s account of Christians singing hymns to Christ as to a god in his letter (*Epistle* 96) from Bithynia to Trajan 111 A.D.

⁷⁶ Bauckham 1998:1f. It may be objected that talk of a coherent biblical monotheism is simplistic. Nevertheless, following Y.Kaufmann 1960, the material contains coherent features (see below), and arguably early Christians would tend to construe the material as a unity.

⁷⁷ Bauckham 1998:2.

⁷⁸ For a typology of mediator figures and mediatorial functions see J. Davila 1999:3-20.

⁷⁹ E.g. Exodus 15:11, Deuteronomy 33:26 and Psalm 89:5-9.

Yahweh. ‘Theoretical’ monotheism is felt to occur later, with, in particular, Isaiah 40-55.⁸⁰ The New Testament also contains wider usages: John 10:34-36 Jesus utilises an Old Testament example (Psalm 82:6) of ‘gods’ being applied to entities other than Yahweh.⁸¹

Some such references to ‘gods’ may deal with those who stand for Yahweh (e.g. Exodus 22:28 and, on some views Psalm 82:1ff). However, elsewhere ‘god’ terms are used, apparently, for supernatural beings other than Yahweh: see Psalm 138:1.⁸² This, of course, is vital. The Old Testament does not deny spiritual entities exist besides God: most notably Satan;⁸³ demons more generally;⁸⁴ and angels.⁸⁵ The New Testament likewise insists on spiritual entities other than Yahweh, in the angels of Revelation and the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke, in the exorcisms of the Synoptics and pauline language regarding ‘powers’ and ‘rulers’, notably in Ephesians,⁸⁶ and Satan’s presence in, for example, the Synoptic temptation narratives.

However, John’s Gospel, so much the trinitarian storm centre and enlisted both by heterodox and orthodox, lacks both the exorcisms so prominent in the Synoptics, and the angelophanies of the birth narratives. Yet Jesus’ passion itself has

⁸⁰ See e.g. B. Anderson 1999:66 for an outline of such views.

⁸¹ Jesus argues that if the Old Testament could so apply the term without blasphemy, then he, the one God sent, rightly calls himself God’s Son. See H. Ridderbos 1997:375.

⁸² The LXX softens the Hebrew *elohim* to ἀγγέλων.

⁸³ Job 1:6ff; Zechariah 3:2.

⁸⁴ Deut. 32:17 and Psalm 106:37. Both apparently deal with objective entities rather than merely adjudicating unfavourably on worship offered to objective nullities. Y. Kaufmann 1960:63-67 deals with OT demonology. While he talks of the demonic being demythologised (65), the context shows that he is stressing i/ that Israelites were not merely assimilating pagan gods; and ii/ that in Israelite demonology, the demons are not sprung from a primordial and therefore equivalent principle of evil: there was no effective rival to Yahweh’s cosmic reign.

⁸⁵ Daniel 10:21, 12:1 and conceivably 4:13.

⁸⁶ See Arnold 1989 for full argument regarding the supernatural elements of thought in Ephesus. For nuanced appreciation of Arnold, see P. O’Brien 1999:54f.

exorcistic overtones, for the prince of this world is in conflict with Jesus (John 14:30), influences Judas (John 13:2) and is overthrown or condemned (John 12:31; 16:11).⁸⁷ Moreover, the pseudo-believers of John 8 who defy Jesus' claims are depicted as children of Satan (8:44), in terms suggesting that this is not merely mythopoeic language but refers to a real entity (the language about Satan's entry into Judas supports this (13:27)). Arguably, there are not several overt exorcistic confrontations in John, but a single, large, underlying one.

Turning to angelophanies, while a birth narrative is omitted,⁸⁸ the Gospel does refer to angels, and the account of angels in the Resurrection narrative (20:12) betrays no editorial hesitation about their existence.

Therefore, supernatural entities other than Yahweh were recognised in both Testaments,⁸⁹ and such entities could be described with terms normally translatable as 'god'. Yet the bible also sharply distinguishes between such spiritual entities and Yahweh. The context of Psalm 106:37 is criticism of practices blurring that distinction, worship alternative to Yahweh. As Anderson comments,⁹⁰ Israel's faith '...was based on a fierce devotion to Yahweh.' Yahweh, adopting terminology from Isaiah 40-55, is said to be incomparable: but on what basis of distinction?

Jeremiah 10:10 can be seen perhaps as summarising much biblical thought here. It reads:

⁸⁷ Compare G. Twelftree 2001:141f on Jesus' ministry as a battle with Satan culminating in the Cross.

⁸⁸ Also true of Mark. Arguably the omission is explicable for compositional reasons, to facilitate irony about claims by Jesus' interlocutors to know his origin.

⁸⁹ Also in the Apocrypha: e.g. Tobit features the clash between Raphael and the demon (see Tobit 8:3), while 2 Maccabees 3:26-34 has the heavenly flogging of Heliodorus.

But the LORD is the true God;
He is the living God and the everlasting King. At his wrath the earth quakes,
And the nations cannot endure his indignation.⁹¹

The setting is Yahweh’s warning not to fear what the nations do, since their customs are false (10:3). This recurrent motif of deception is associated with the created nature of idols. Verses 4f explain that the gods or idols of the nations cannot move, talk, do good or evil. This contrasts with the effective greatness of Yahweh, who is incomparable (10:6f: a typical deuterio-isaianic theme contrasting Yahweh with would-be rivals). Jeremiah 10:10 then contrasts God as a living and true God with idols, which are of human origination (10:8f). Further, the subsequent logic of God as maker of all (v. 16) apparently precludes anything making him: nothing existed to do it. That suggests that the corollary of vv. 8f is that Yahweh is uncreated. A further important comparison then appears, in terms of creating (10:11ff). The idols do not create (v. 11), while Yahweh is declared both as the creator of all (vv. 12f and v 16), and also (v 13) as providentially controlling the elements of the cosmos, a sovereign. Small wonder, then, that idols are summed up (vv 14f) as lies and delusion, with no ‘breath’ (*ruach*/ πνεῦμα). The contrast with the God who breathes life in creation is hard to miss.

Thus Yahweh ’s incomparability is maintained by a series of contrasts:

Yahweh		Idols (gods of the nations)
Creates	vs	cannot create
Uncreated	vs	created
Sovereign	vs	Impotent

⁹⁰ Anderson 1999:66.

These distinctions are prominent in Isaiah 40-55, but by no means confined to that material.⁹² The created nature of idols is particularly important,⁹³ and is a persistent thought in the pre- and post-exilic prophets,⁹⁴ but also in pentateuchal material,⁹⁵ and extends into the deuterocanonical Wisdom literature,⁹⁶ as well as the New Testament.⁹⁷ Isaiah 40-55 also highlights Yahweh as creator,⁹⁸ but again this thought is persistent.⁹⁹ Yahweh's supreme sovereignty is likewise underlined in Isaiah 40-55, (40:23; 44:25-28), notably in his long-standing and effective plans for salvation (46:8ff). Again this motif of sovereignty is not confined to Jeremiah and Isaiah,¹⁰⁰ and is associated both with Yahweh as creator,¹⁰¹ and as unique provider of salvation, especially in the Exodus.¹⁰²

In this way the vocabulary of Isaiah 40-55 which stresses Yahweh as incomparable and unique summarises considerable biblical data, and these themes continue in deuterocanonical literature. Hence, Mauser and Bauckham can appeal to considerable biblical support:¹⁰³ God's uniqueness or oneness lies not so much in being the only spiritual entity but rather in him being incomparable as one who

⁹¹ NRSV translation. Unhappily the LXX omits v. 10. The word translated as 'truth' is *emeth*.

⁹² Although B.Halpern 1987:107 rightly points out that earlier texts, while consistent with e.g. Jeremiah and Isaiah (hence it is possible to speak of a biblical monotheism), may reflect a less self-conscious monotheism.

⁹³ E.g. Isaiah 40:19f, 44:9-20; 46:6

⁹⁴ E.g. Amos 5:26; Hosea 8:6; 13:2; 14:3; Micah 5:13; Ezekiel 7:20; 20:32; Nehemiah 9:18 and Daniel 3

⁹⁵ E.g. Ex 20:4f; 32:8, 31; Deut 4:16, 28;

⁹⁶ Wisdom 13:13ff; 14:8.

⁹⁷ Romans 1:18ff.

⁹⁸ E.g. 40:21f, 26ff; 44:24; 45:9-14.

⁹⁹ E.g. Genesis 1 and 2; Pss 19:1ff; 24:1f; 89:11ff; 90:2; 93:1; Prov 8:27ff; Nehemiah 9:6. In the deuterocanonical Wisdom literature, see Wisdom 9:9; 11:17; Sirach 24:8

¹⁰⁰ E.g. Pss 2; 103:19; Daniel 4:3, 17, 34. In the deuterocanonical Wisdom literature, see Wisdom 13:15; Sirach 16:26ff.

¹⁰¹ E.g. Pss 24:1; 95:4f

¹⁰² E.g. Deut 4:32ff.

¹⁰³ Mauser 1991:257ff and Bauckham 1998:10ff.

vanquishes all rivals¹⁰⁴ or as sole creator and ruler of all.¹⁰⁵ God is supreme in terms of his rule.¹⁰⁶ At the level of being, then, what is distinctive about God is that he is uncreated.¹⁰⁷ This suggests, consequently, God's independence of the created order, notably in that the passing years do not corrupt him (Psalm 102:25-27).

However, an obvious question here is whether the figure of Wisdom, especially as developed, contradicts this. The provenance of the biblical figure of Wisdom remains controversial, as does the extent to which Wisdom should be interpreted as a separate hypostasis.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, it is important to note that Wisdom is no rival to God. Her co-operation with God is evident in Proverbs 3:19f and 8:22-31 and this co-operation can be seen in terms of God's sovereignty even over Wisdom (Sirach 24:8), a point re-inforced by the picture of God as the grantor of Wisdom to humans (Sirach 6:37; Wisdom 9:9). Hence Wisdom 12:13 can, consistently with an elevated view of Wisdom, assert that there is no God besides God (Wisdom 12:13),¹⁰⁹ for God's sovereignty remains intact.¹¹⁰

Bauckham observes that New Testament writers fully associate Jesus with this divine identity.¹¹¹ This is justifiable, given that uncreatedness is apparently ascribed to the Son, or Word, by John 1:1ff and Hebrews 1, the latter interestingly applying to the

¹⁰⁴ Mauser 1991:262.

¹⁰⁵ Bauckham 1998:10.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. C. Layman 1988:291ff, and Halpern 1987:81, following (here) Kaufmann 1960:29.

¹⁰⁷ Kaufmann 1960:22, 121 stresses that in biblical monotheism nothing transcends God.

¹⁰⁸ J. Hadley 1997:235 n.7 notes that there is no agreed close definition of hypostatization.

¹⁰⁹ Compare Hadley 1997:243 who comments wisdom remains '“under the thumb” of Yahweh', and Murphy 1997:232

¹¹⁰ As Halpern 1987:81 notes, this is the decisive criterion in Kaufmann's argument.

¹¹¹ Bauckham 1998:26.

Son the language of incorruption from Psalm 102:25-27 which the Old Testament applies to Yahweh.

2.4.2. Uniqueness In Relation To Worship

Israel, as Anderson notes,¹¹² was marked by a fierce and exclusive zeal for Yahweh. Bauckham, amongst others, comments on the link between God's uniqueness and monolatry.¹¹³ The Old Testament critique of alternative objects of worship is well-attested,¹¹⁴ but, of course, the New Testament retains this antipathy. Thus, Christians are converted from idolatry (1 Thessalonians 1:9), and passages such as 1 Corinthians 10:14 prohibit idolatry. At a visionary level, Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 prohibit the worship even of angels. Theological justification appears in Romans 1:25 which depicts idolatry as worshipping the creature rather than the creator. This seems to show continuity between what makes God God (his status as creator, not created) and the rationale for prohibiting alternative worship. One must add Paul's further observations in 1 Corinthians 10:19f. Although idols are nothing in themselves (a continuity with Isaiah 44), nevertheless idolatry is not merely dealing with a nullity, for idols are vehicles for demons (a continuity with Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37). All this justifies S. Johnson's verdict: 'The earliest followers of Jesus were monotheistic Jews.'¹¹⁵

¹¹² Anderson 1999:66.

¹¹³ Bauckham 1999:44.

¹¹⁴ Further to the material from Isaiah and Jeremiah, note especially 2 Kings 17:7-23, which diagnoses the Assyrian conquest as an outworking of God's anger at idolatry (v 7).

¹¹⁵ Johnson 1949:103.

However, not all forms of worship, even if ‘offered’ to Yahweh, were acceptable. Some sacrifices were improper,¹¹⁶ and the emphasis on Yahweh’s unique name and its revelation undercuts the welcome to other names that is so conspicuous in the polyonymous monotheism of *The Golden Ass*.

Obviously the New Testament’s monotheistic monolatry does not preclude worshipping Jesus (e.g. Hebrews 1:6, Philippians 2:10-11 and Revelation 5:12-14). Bauckham rightly stresses the use of Psalm 110 in relation to Jesus as establishing Jesus’ sovereignty,¹¹⁷ while Jesus is also depicted as creator.¹¹⁸ Bauckham argues:

In this way they [sc. The NT writers] develop a kind of christological monotheism which is fully continuous with early Jewish monotheism but distinctive in the way it sees Jesus Christ himself as intrinsic to the identity of the unique God.¹¹⁹

Hence the worship of Jesus is utterly intelligible and consistent within this particular monotheistic framework, for he is creator and sovereign.

There is, then, radical difference between this New Testament monotheism and the polyonymous monotheism of the Greco-Roman world, particularly in the former’s exclusivity in worship.

2.4.3. Uniqueness In Relationship

Yahweh’s uniqueness relationally, that he alone is creator, and sovereign, has already been mentioned. This raises the question of *creatio ex nihilo*. While not completely explicit in the Old Testament, it is, nevertheless, an attractive reading of

¹¹⁶ E.g. 2 Kgs 21:6.

¹¹⁷ Bauckham 1999:66.

¹¹⁸ Bauckham 1998:35, citing John 5:21-23.

¹¹⁹ Bauckham 1998:26f.

Genesis 1:1ff,¹²⁰ and this interpretation is certainly present in the intertestamental period.¹²¹ It is also completely consistent with a God who is sovereign Lord of all and indeed whose relationship with the cosmos seems ‘proprietary’.¹²² This notably contrasts with the Demiurge of the *Timaeus*, whose creation is not *ex nihilo*, and whose sovereign relations are not grounded in this way.

2.5. Conclusions

This review obviously tends to distance Jewish-biblical monotheism from its prominent pagan philosophical and religious monotheistic counterparts. The conception of the creator-created relation tends to undermine tendencies to monism, while the strictures on worship in one name render polyonymous monotheism highly problematic.

Moreover, while Jewish-biblical monotheism contemplates more than one spiritual entity, patterns of divine action remain markedly different from polytheism’s separated spheres of operation, whether that separation be functional or geographical.

With this review of Jewish-biblical monotheism in mind, it is not surprising that Jesus is treated as God in a full sense, for he is depicted as creator and sovereign and pre-existent. But this raises two vital questions for considering Tertullian in the next chapter:

¹²⁰ See G. Wenham 1987:11-14.

¹²¹ 2 Mac 7:28.

¹²² E.g. Psalm 95:5 links God as ‘owner’ and lord to his position as creator.

1. To what extent does Tertullian reflect a biblical basis in his monotheism (or is Praxeas, his antagonist in fact closer to the mark)?
2. Given that Jesus is God, what is, for Tertullian, his relation to his Father?

CHAPTER 3: TERTULLIAN AND MONOTHEISM

In chapter 3 it is proposed that:

3(a). Tertullian's monotheism is closely patterned on biblical-Jewish monotheism, rather than Greco-Roman monotheisms, for Tertullian stresses God's status as sovereign, uncreated creator.

3(b). Tertullian links monotheism closely to divine monarchy.

3(c). Tertullian upholds both monotheism and the plurality of divine Persons by ensuring the Son is no rival of his Father. This is achieved through a pattern of derivation, including a derivation of sovereignty and substance from the Father.

3(d). This pattern of derivation is not ditheistic because the Persons are inseparable, have (unlike polytheistic action) a unity of action and are not a plurality of independent, uncreated entities.

3(e). Tertullian shows the necessity of the orthodox position by reference to the revelation of distinct Persons in the events of the Incarnation.

3(f). For Tertullian, revelation in salvation history enables us to see eternal relations because of God's truthfulness.

3(g). Tertullian's own position is unstable because, for him, the primary relation disclosed in the Incarnation, Sonship, is not eternal.

3(h). Tertullian's position is susceptible of logical development towards stability by seeing the Incarnate relationship of sonship as disclosing an eternal relation of that nature.

3(i). On this reasoning, egalitarian presentations of immanent trinitarian relationships seem inconsistent with monotheism and thus ditheistic or tritheistic. Rather, for Tertullian, the filial derivation of the Son implies his obedience, as manifested in the Incarnation.

3(j). Sonship matters greatly to Tertullian soteriologically, since Jesus must be known and believed in as Son.

3.1. Introduction: The Target Of *Against Praxeas*

3.1.1. *A Heresy Of The Unity*

Satan, claims Tertullian, ‘upholds the unique Master...so that he can make a heresy even out of the unity’.¹ That heresy lies behind much of what Tertullian attacks in *Against Praxeas*. Tertullian’s opening barrage is, however, striking. It is perhaps tempting to think that the problem in explaining the Trinity centres on accounting for plurality, and, consequently, the evaluation of trinitarian theologies may also focus on how those theologies deal with plurality, while God’s unity is taken as a given, from which subsequent discussion proceeds. Tertullian undermines this approach. The problem is two-fold: how to account for the unity of, as well as the plurality within, God. One may be mistaken about the unity just as the plurality.

This seems obvious, but is of the greatest significance. For if one evaluates plurality within God using a mistaken account of his unity, then acceptable accounts of that plurality risk being wrongly rejected. This, of course, is just what Tertullian contends has happened with Praxeas’ teaching.

However, Tertullian himself is certainly committed to some form of the unity or unicity of God.² This is quickly established in *Against Praxeas*³ and is no *ad hominem* concession. Tertullian asserts just this in a wide range of writing,⁴ and as an

¹ *Against Praxeas* (hereafter *AgP*) 1. *Unicum dominum vindicat...ut et de unico haeresim faciat*. The text and translation used is E. Evans 1948.

² Similarly Hippolytus recounts elders both resisting the teaching of Noetus and also claiming to be faithful to monotheism ἐνα θεὸν οἶδαμεν ἀληθῶς. *Against Noetus* (hereafter *AgN*) 1.7.

³ *AgP* 2 *Nos vero et semper, ...unicum quidem deum credimus*.

⁴ Including *Apology* 17; *On Idolatry* 6.2; *Against Hermogenes* 4.2,5; *Against Marcion* Bk 1.3; *Prescription against Heretics* 13; *The Soul’s Testimony* 2; *An Answer to the Jews* 2; *Scapula* 2.

important, not incidental, part of his arguments. This is most conspicuous perhaps in *Against Marcion* (for unicity reveals both the error of Marcionism and its seriousness), *Against Hermogenes* (where it again reveals error, this time that of viewing matter as eternal) and in *On Idolatry* (where it helps establish the error and sinfulness of idolatry). Tertullian himself, therefore, uses divine unity or unicity as a criterion. Superficially, of course, Praxeas was also doing this. The question then arises, what did Tertullian think unacceptable about Praxeas' view of divine unity, and why?

3.1.2. The Contours Of Praxeas' Views

Tertullian describes Praxeas' view thus: the Father came down into the virgin, was born, suffered and is in fact Jesus Christ.⁵ The key feature is Praxeas' identification of the trinitarian Persons with each other, in fact with the Father. Several points arise. First, it is difficult to be sure what this implies for Jesus after the Ascension. Possibly, the Father assumes the identity of Jesus purely temporarily in the Incarnation, surrendering it after the Ascension. Tertullian returns later to the content of the heresy, stating that for the heretics, Jesus Christ is himself the point where Father and Son meet: '...they say that the Son is flesh, that is, the Man, Jesus, while the Father is the Spirit, that is, God, Christ.'⁶ This formulation does not clearly decide whether temporal or eternal modalism is in view.

Secondly, Tertullian concentrates on this identification of the Persons as the crucial issue, to which one may add, thirdly, that Tertullian is stressing that it is the Father who acts as 'Son' and 'Spirit'. Effectively there is just one Person, the Father,

⁵ *AgP* 1. Compare ch 2. Hippolytus' account of Noetus' heresy *AgN* 1.2 is very similar.

⁶ *AgP* 27.

appearing under different guises.⁷ This is particularly serious for Tertullian who emphasises that humans may not see God (Tertullian strongly uses Exodus 33:20).⁸ An incarnation of the Father would deny this.

Both these latter issues have implications for revelation in the Incarnation, the place of which in Tertullian's thought will be dealt with later.

3.1.3. *The Concerns Of Praxeas' Thought*

Tertullian also describes what motivates Praxeas' position. Two aspects are particularly pertinent. The first relates to systematic considerations flowing from God's unity or unicity. He points out in chapter two that Praxeas' view '...thinks it impossible to believe in one God [*unicum deum*] unless it says that both Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one and the same [*ipsum eundemque*].' This links Praxeas' view clearly with God's unity or unicity.⁹ Praxeas is also depicted in chapter three as claiming to uphold the divine monarchy. The divine unity or unicity and the divine monarchy seem linked, so that infringing one infringes the other. This will be a feature of Tertullian's defence of orthodoxy, that a defence of the monarchy readily functions as a defence of the unity (see e.g. chapter 3). Further, this nexus seems in some respects common ground between Praxeas' view and Tertullian's, for in chapter twenty Tertullian links both divine unity and the monarchy when commenting on biblical texts which advocates of Praxeas' position ignore but which manage to preserve both unity and monarchy.

⁷ There is, then, no hidden 'fourth' element of the godhead. Again, compare *AgN*: 1.2; 2.3.

⁸ He refers to it three times in ch. 14, and also in ch. 24. K. McCruden 2002:334 thinks the Father's invisibility is a key value Tertullian wishes to defend.

⁹ Compare *AgN* 2.1-3.

The second aspect for consideration is the claim of Praxeas and others that their view of God's unity or unicity has biblical authority. Tertullian cites three texts used by them: Isaiah 40:5, John 10:30 and 14:9-11.¹⁰

In short, then, Praxeas' position turns on God's unity and monarchy, which are felt to require that the events of the Incarnation be explained by the Father being Son and Spirit. Hence, the concepts of monotheism and monarchy must be examined, to which task we now turn.

3.2. Tertullian And Monotheism

3.2.1. *Monotheism Amongst Tertullian's Fellow-Christians*

Substantial evidence indicates that Greek Apologists argued for a biblically patterned monotheism as outlined in the previous chapter. G. Bray comments '...the first and fundamental concern of all the patristic writers was to preserve a pure monotheism.'¹¹ This seems well-founded. Thus, it was noted above that the biblical material stressed God's uncreatedness, something the Apologists express as God uniquely being without beginning, or before the ages.¹² God is, however, creator of all,¹³ and, for some Apologists, creation must be *ex nihilo*, distancing this monotheism from various Greco-Roman philosophies. However, this creatorship is now described in terms involving the *Logos*. Theophilus' account of the involvement of the *Logos* is representative:

¹⁰ *AgP* 20. Hippolytus refers to Ex. 3:6 and Isa 44:6, although Jn 10:30 and 14:9-11 also feature in *AgN* as texts requiring interpretation against Noetianism. It is intriguing that both *AgP* and *AgN* deal with texts from Isa 40-55, a 'high-water mark' for OT monotheism.

¹¹ Bray 1980:50, reacting to M. Wiles' contention that the patristic writers were concerned with the distinct existence of three persons. T. Rajak 1999:67 comments of Justin in the *Dialogue against Trypho* that monotheism is the 'premiss behind the whole enquiry.'

¹² E.g. Tatian *To the Greeks* 4; Athenagoras *Plea for the Christians* 4, 10; Theophilus *To Autolycus* 2. 10.

¹³ E.g. Tatian *To the Greeks* 5; Athenagoras *Plea* 10; Theophilus *Autolycus* 2. 10.

God, then, having his own Word internal within his own bowels, begat him, emitting him along with his own wisdom before all things. He had this Word as a helper in the things that were created by him and by him he made all things.¹⁴

Several points arise. First, the primary category for the Second Person here is *Logos*. When identifying who the Son is, Athenagoras comments tellingly ‘But the Son of God is the Logos of the Father.’¹⁵ Secondly, this *Logos* satisfies biblical monotheistic criteria for divinity. He is uncreated: he is a distinct entity within the Father before all ages, although not emitted until, apparently, the world’s creation is in view.¹⁶ Further, he is so closely associated with creation that he can fairly be called creator.

Turning to worship, the Apologists are equally in tune with the biblical witness. Tatian comments in the context of worship:

Him [sc. God] we know from his creation, and apprehend his invisible power by his works. I refuse to adore that workmanship which he has made for our sakes.¹⁷

This language, so reminiscent of Romans 1:18ff, reproduces the prohibition on worshipping the created.

Latin writings evince similar concerns to uphold such a monotheism.¹⁸ Particularly telling, though, for the argument in *Against Praxeas* is Minucius Felix’s *Octavius*. The Christian ‘Octavius’ claims (chapter 17) that providential order in the cosmos points to a supreme governor.¹⁹ He then argues (chapter 18) that such providential order presupposes a united rule, a monarchy rather than dyarchy, or polyarchy:

¹⁴ Theophilus *Autolycus* 2. 10. Compare Tatian *To the Greeks* 5; Athenagoras *Plea* 10.

¹⁵ Athenagoras *Plea* 10. Although he later talks in Father-Son terms.

¹⁶ This position’s instability will be developed in 3.3.2. and 3.4 below.

¹⁷ Tatian *To the Greeks* 4.

¹⁸ See e.g. S. Price 1999:122f on Cyprian and Minucius Felix.

Canst thou believe that in heaven there is a division of the supreme power, and that the whole authority of that true and divine empire is sundered...?

Here one closely approaches the debate between Tertullian and Praxeas, for the relationship between the First and Second Persons, whatever it is, should not permit division of the divine power.²⁰ Division would imply that neither was fully divine.

3.2.2. *Tertullian And Monotheism Outside Against Praxeas*

Concerning God's unique or exclusive being, Tertullian defends God's eternity particularly strikingly in *Against Hermogenes*. Here he encounters Hermogenes' argument that God created using existing material.²¹ Hermogenes, of course, resembles the *Timaeus* here.²² Interestingly, Hermogenes also contends that for God to be 'Lord' there must always have been something over which he was Lord,²³ a species of the co-relativity argument which later proved so significant for Origen and Athanasius in their discussions of the Son's eternity.²⁴

Tertullian reacts with characteristic vehemence, but his reasons are intriguing. Hermogenes has argued matter is eternal: but, Tertullian observes, '...what other essential property of God is there than eternity?'²⁵ Even allowing for rhetorical exaggeration (there may be other essential properties), this is revealing. By 'eternal' he means having always existed and going on to exist forever,²⁶ which includes being

¹⁹ Providence also forms part of the monotheism of Novatian *Trinity* ch. 8.

²⁰ Novatian *Trinity* chs. 30 and 31 addresses a similar point and deals with it as God delegating power to the Son.

²¹ Hermogenes argues the other alternatives, that God created out of himself or out of nothing, are either logically impossible or make God the author of evil. *Against Hermogenes* 2 (Hereafter *AgH*).

²² J. Waszink 1956:9 posits primarily platonic influences on Hermogenes, which is plausible.

²³ Tertullian's description: *AgH* 3.1.

²⁴ See P. Widdicombe 1994 *passim*.

²⁵ *AgH* 4.1.

²⁶ *AgH* 4.1.

uncreated. This property is the test of true divinity. Tertullian argues Hermogenes' view has disastrous consequences:

By possessing these He is God alone, and by His sole possession of them He is One. If another also shared in the possession, there would then be as many gods as there were possessors of these attributes of God. Hermogenes, therefore, introduces two gods: he introduces Matter as God's equal. God, however, must be One, because that is God which is supreme; but nothing else can be supreme than that which is unique; and that cannot possibly be unique which has anything equal to it; and Matter will be equal with God when it is held to be eternal.²⁷

This prompts some observations. First, Tertullian's point is not simply that Hermogenes has two gods: the relationship between God and Matter in Hermogenes' system is also obnoxious. Tertullian argues that on Hermogenes' view 'The fact of its past existence it [sc. Matter] owed to no-one so that it could be subject to no-one.'²⁸ Hence, since Matter is not dependent on God as creator, he is not its lord and therefore not supreme. So, for Tertullian the exclusivity of divine eternity is tied to God's sovereignty. This is of no little importance. 'Monotheism' (taken as what is exclusive to God) and monarchy are not severable. Moreover, preserving supremacy or monarchy is a primary, if not the primary, concern: for the monarchy functions as a criterion to weigh issues about exclusivity. J. Moingt's analysis puts all this well:

The unicity of God is, then, deduced from the existence of a single sovereignty [*seigneurie*], which can belong to only one person: *unicus Dominus*.²⁹

Secondly, Tertullian is well aware of the objection that on his view we could share nothing with God. This would be unfortunate for the claim, for example, for a future eternity. Tertullian responds that God may bestow properties on his creatures, but those properties originate in God and therefore do not violate God's supremacy.³⁰

²⁷ *AgH* 4.4-5.

²⁸ *AgH*. 3.

²⁹ Moingt 1970:342.

³⁰ *AgH* 5.

The importance of uncreatedness emerges elsewhere in Tertullian,³¹ but *Against Marcion* I. 3 and 4 are particularly instructive. Here Tertullian again dwells on eternity as a ‘requirement’ for being God. Being God means being uncreated, which, he asserts, God enjoys uniquely. Without this exclusivity, argues Tertullian, God will not be supreme:

[What] must be the condition of the great Supreme himself? Surely it must be that nothing is equal to him, i.e. that there is no other great supreme; because if there were, he would have an equal; and if he had an equal, he would no longer be the great Supreme...³²

This echoes the stress of Isaiah 40-55 on God’s incomparability and consequent uniqueness. God’s relationship to the world as its sovereign, reigning without rival, is intimately connected to what God is.³³ As creator from nothing,³⁴ God is the proprietor of the cosmos: ‘All things belong to him...the universe belongs to the Creator...’,³⁵ which harmonises with the biblical conclusion from God’s creative activity.

Turning to worship, Tertullian stresses that the one God is worshipped by Christians,³⁶ but concedes clearly that Jesus Christ is too.³⁷ This is intriguing, for Tertullian strongly opposes false worship as *On Idolatry* shows. Tertullian utilises pagan concessions that cults arose around dead heroes,³⁸ and an underlying theme is certainly that idolatry is a human religious construction³⁹ (literally, with the idol-

³¹ E.g. *Veiling of Virgins* 1; *To the Nations* 3.

³² *Against Marcion* Bk 1.3.

³³ Again, compare Moingt 1970:342, who speaks of God’s relation as sole lord to the world, which only the creator has.

³⁴ Creation *ex nihilo* occurs outside *AgH*, e.g. *Apology* 17 and *Prescription against Heretics* 13.

³⁵ *Against Marcion* Bk 1.11.

³⁶ *Apology* 17.

³⁷ *Apology* 18.

³⁸ *On Idolatry* 15.1 & 2. The view is especially associated with Euhemerus.

³⁹ E.g. *On Idolatry* 4.2; 15.9.

maker).⁴⁰ Following 1 Corinthians 10:19f, idolatry is linked to demonolatry.⁴¹

However, a crucial rationale for Tertullian's critique comes in 4.2.

Antecesserat Enoch praedicans omnia elementa, omnem mundi censum, quae caelo, quae mari, quae terra continentur, in idolatriam versuros daemones et spiritus desertorum angelorum ut pro deo adversus deum consecrarentur. Omnia igitur colit humanus error praeter ipsum omnium conditorem...

Idolatry, then, is a demonically inspired displacement of the creator (*omnium conditorem*) by what is created (*omnia...quae caelo etc continentur*). The true object of worship is the creator.

Therefore several features emerge:

1. Tertullian's underlying concern with the 'ditheism' of Hermogenes and Marcion is that it undercuts God's supremacy or sovereignty.
2. The exclusivity of God's uncreatedness helps safeguard this supremacy.
3. Worship is properly directed only at the uncreated creator.

However, this creates fascinating questions regarding Christ. For Tertullian consistently to accept the worship of Christ, this can only be because Jesus is:

1. an uncreated creator

and

2. no 'rival' to the Supreme God.

Passages like John 1:1ff show why Jesus might be viewed both as a creator from nothing, and also as pre-existent. To that extent, the first criterion is satisfied. The problem is meeting the second. Here one can appreciate the 'economy' of Praxeas'

⁴⁰ *On Idolatry* 6.2.

⁴¹ E.g. *On Idolatry* 15.5. Waszink and Van Winden 1987:75 summarise thus: 'The real object of worship are [sic] the demons. The idol is something that serves as an intermediate entity between the man and the demon.'

solution: Tertullian's principles are, at this point, compatible with Praxeas' identification of the Father with the Son. Furthermore, material in *Against Hermogenes* especially seems to create acute problems for Tertullian:

[But] He has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of His having always been God. For He could not have been the Father previous to the Son, nor a Judge previous to sin. There was, however, a time when neither sin existed with Him, nor the Son; the former of which was to constitute the Lord a Judge, and the latter a Father. In this way He was not Lord previous to those things of which He was to be the Lord. But He was only to become Lord at some future time: just as He became the Father by the Son, and a Judge by sin, so also did He become Lord by means of those things which He had made, in order that they might serve Him.⁴²

On this view, 'Father' is something God becomes. It is hard to see how the *filial* relationship is eternal. Of course, if it is not eternal, how can the Second Person, at least *qua* Son, be legitimately worshipped? Tertullian, then, faces the challenge of showing how two persons (indeed three) can be uncreated without attracting the very monotheistic criticisms he levels at Hermogenes and Marcion. His answer lies in *Against Praxeas* to which we now turn.

3.3. Tertullian And *Against Praxeas*

3.3.1. The Monotheism Of *Against Praxeas*

Tertullian acknowledges in *Against Praxeas* that orthodox Christian belief includes the belief that God is 'one' (*unicus*).⁴³ This is, however, immediately and significantly qualified. First, belief in God as *unicus* goes hand in hand with belief in the economy: '*...unicum quidem sed cum sua oeconomia esse credendum*'. The obligatory connotation of *credendum*⁴⁴ covers both the unicity and the economy and also helps explain why Tertullian so stresses the economy. Secondly, obviously, for

⁴² *AgH* 3. See too the striking language of 18 where Wisdom's birth and creation is contrasted with God who is unborn and uncreated.

⁴³ *AgP* 3.

⁴⁴ Whether *credendum* is gerund or gerundive, an obligatory note remains.

Tertullian the economy fits with monotheism: the economy is how the unicity ‘works’.⁴⁵

Tertullian recognises, nevertheless, that the orthodox are accused of advocating two or three gods, the kind of criticism he launches so tellingly in *Against Hermogenes* and *Against Marcion*. He summarises Praxeas’ party as claiming that they, at least, uphold the monarchy. This does not introduce monarchy as a completely new topic, moving the debate away from God as *unicus*. There are indeed two concerns, as Moingt aptly comments:

[Tertullian’s] second concern,, is to show that he does not destroy the unicity [*unicité*] of God, nor divide his power over the world.⁴⁶

The discussion of monarchy is not, however, incidental nor merely illustrative, nor simply adopted opportunistically from Praxeas.⁴⁷ For the foregoing discussions of *Against Hermogenes* and *Against Marcion* show that monarchy is highly relevant to monotheism for Tertullian. God as *unicus* stands in the closest relation to God as supreme monarch. Rather Tertullian faces in *Against Praxeas* 3 the challenge of showing why his ‘supremacy/no equal’ argument does not equally preclude the Son’s personal distinction.

Given Tertullian’s extensive use of God’s supremacy in connection with monotheism, he could not consistently reject the divine monarchy. Nor does he. He first defines monarchy, and then works out what would destroy it. This is consistent

⁴⁵ *AgP* 3 puts it thus: ‘*unitas...non destruat ab illa [sc trinitas] sed administretur.*’

⁴⁶ Moingt 1966:349.

⁴⁷ G. Lampe 1997:56 describes the monarchy analogy as ‘unfortunate’, presumably because he thinks it suggests subordinationism or polytheism.

with strategies in *Against Marcion* and *Against Hermogenes*, which also test positions with reference to supremacy.

Definitionally, monarchy is ‘a single and sole empire’.⁴⁸ Tertullian contends that such a monarchy is not denied when its administration is in more than one pair of hands. A monarch may have provincial governors and so forth. Now for those familiar with *Against Hermogenes* and *Against Marcion* this would not initially seem very satisfactory. If power can be in more than one pair of hands, what was wrong with Hermogenes’ position?

Fortunately, Tertullian also explains how a division of power could destroy monarchy:

Overthrow of monarchy you should understand as [taking place] when there is superimposed another kingship of its own character and its own quality [*alia dominatio suae condicionis et proprii status*] and consequently hostile [*ac per hoc aemula*] when another god is introduced to oppose the Creator, as with Marcion, or many gods according to people like Valentinus or Prodicus: then it is for the overthrow of the monarchy when it is for the destruction of the Creator.⁴⁹

In fact, this resembles the ‘supremacy/no equal’ arguments of *Against Marcion* and *Against Hermogenes*. Any given ‘power’ must be analysed to see if it represents ‘another kingship’, that is, one with its own position and standing. Such a kingship is a rival, because it constitutes an alternative, competing centre of sovereignty. If there is such an alternative sovereignty, supremacy cannot exist, at least on Tertullian’s arguments. Fundamentally, the objection to such a rival dominion is its independence. Its power is underived and not traced back to God himself.

⁴⁸ ‘*Singulare et unicum imperium*’: AgP 3. Evans’ translation ‘Dominion’ might more helpfully now render *imperium*.

⁴⁹ AgP 3. ‘*Aemula*’ could also be rendered ‘rival’.

Moingt's summary is that since the Son's power has no independent origin, the monarchy is not destroyed.⁵⁰

Tertullian's subsequent exploration of the Son's position, in *Against Praxeas* 4, supports this. The Son's authority has been delivered to him by the Father, and he does things by the Father's will (Propositions drawn from Matthew 28:18 and John 5:19). Therefore, there is no *alia dominatio*, for all authority traces back to the one source. An important issue arises here. Tertullian may well be taking these verses as referring not just to the period of the Incarnation but more generally to Father-Son relations.⁵¹ In effect, here economic trinitarian relations disclose immanent ones. Two considerations support this. First, Tertullian refers to 1 Corinthians 15:27f, which deals with the eternal future, and which he interprets as the Son handing authority back to the Father. Secondly, for Tertullian's argument to succeed his account of Father-Son relations must not breach the monarchy in eternity.

Thus Tertullian's framework means that he can assert the monarchy remains intact if the Son's position derives from the Father. Derivation is critical here, giving a certain patrocentricity to Tertullian's monarchy, for the Son's rule traces back to the Father.

For Lampe, however, monarchy is an 'illustration' that opens the door to 'extreme subordination and at worst polytheism'.⁵² Naturally this requires further consideration. But it is notable that Tertullian's argument uses monarchy consistently with his theology elsewhere and that monarchy safeguards God's uniqueness rather

⁵⁰ Moingt 1970:352-3.

⁵¹ See below.

than dilutes it. However, assessing the success of Tertullian's approach also depends on his handling of the Father-Son relationship. To this we now turn.

3.3.2. *Tertullian And The Relation Of The First And Second Persons*

For Lampe, Tertullian's developed account of relations between the First and Second Persons essentially resembles that of the Apologists.⁵³ It is thus worth recalling how the Apologists might explain the relationship. Commenting on Tatian, Lampe writes:⁵⁴

From eternity the *Logos* was present with God, immanent in him as the creative reason may be said to be immanent in a man. It was, as it were, a potential capacity for creating, and at the moment of creation this was actualised; the *Logos* was put forth to be the agent of the making and sustaining of the whole created order.

Three things are striking. First, such a description is readily associated with John 1:1ff. Secondly, the basic category for the First-Second Person relation is that of God-*Logos*. Thirdly, a question arises over the 'unactualised' *Logos* before creation. Is the *Logos* genuinely subsistent in eternity? For Athenagoras, the *Logos* apparently does so subsist. He comments that while the *Logos* is the first 'product' of God (projected in view of creation), nevertheless the *Logos* has not been brought into existence.⁵⁵ Athenagoras's reason is significant: the *Logos* has always been immanent within God, for God has always been λογικός. This suggests that without the *Logos*, God would have been lacking. The relationship is constitutive of something about the First Person.⁵⁶

⁵² Lampe 1997:56.

⁵³ Lampe 1997:56. See too A. Grillmeier 1975:117 'In the opinion of many writers, the older Western Christology finds its consummation in Tertullian.'

⁵⁴ Lampe 1997:34, explaining Tatian *To the Greeks* 7.

⁵⁵ *Plea* 10.

⁵⁶ M. Grant 1988:108f comments on the way Athenagoras sees the Persons as united in power but distinguished in rank.

Turning to *Against Praxeas*, chapters 5-9 discuss this question of relation at length. The argument's goal is set out at the close of chapter. 8:

In this way the Trinity, proceeding [*decurrens*] by intermingled and connected degrees [*gradus*] from the Father, in no respect challenges the monarchy, while it conserves the quality of the economy.

The Father here is the 'source' from which the other Persons proceed, and because there is then a principle of supremacy, the monarchy is safe, for the reasons Tertullian has already given. Equally importantly, such a procession preserves the economy. Quite why this preservation is so vital must be examined later.

Tertullian draws heavily on John 1:1 for a description of the procession of God's *Logos*. Before all things God was alone (*solus*) in that nothing was external to him. But he was not alone absolutely, for he had Reason (*Ratio*) within him and with him.⁵⁷ Tertullian's circumlocution here is interesting. The separation of 'within him' and 'with him' underlines that *Ratio* is not identical with God. Further, this relation predates becoming Son. It is, however, eternal. E. Osborn notes:⁵⁸ 'God always had Logos as Reason...'

Ratio becomes *sermo* ('discourse' in Evans' translation) in view of creation (chs. 5-7). This can be described as 'nativity' (*nativitas*), for Discourse has proceeded from God.⁵⁹ The filial relationship is, then, something that happens to the godhead.⁶⁰ He comments later that 'Son' is a name that is received.⁶¹ Tertullian remarks on the procession of Discourse:

...thereafter causing him to be his Father by proceeding from whom he became Son, the first-begotten as begotten before all things, the only begotten as alone

⁵⁷ 'Habebat enim secum quam habebat in semetipso rationem, suam scilicet.' *AgP* 5.

⁵⁸ Osborn 1997:124.

⁵⁹ 'ex deo [*sermo*] procedit' *AgP* 7.

⁶⁰ Compare McCruden 2002:332 who stresses the Word proceeds at a point in time.

⁶¹ *AgP* 8.

begotten out of God in a true sense from the womb of his heart, according as the Father himself testifies 'My heart hath disgorged a good Discourse'⁶²

Tertullian proposes, then, a relationship like this. The First Person has 'another' with him and within him, so the Second Person does not reduce into the First Person. The First Person has a priority, thereby preserving the supremacy and monarchy. But the Second Person is not created *ex nihilo* (being *ex nihilo* is a criterion of not being divine), but shares in creating *ex nihilo* (a criterion of being divine). Tertullian is thus well-placed to show not merely that his trinity is orthodox, but also that Praxeas' is false, for Praxeas is not giving due weight to the claim of John 1:1 that the Word was with God.

However, since the God-*Logos* relationship is the underlying, eternal relationship, this aspect seems primary in the relationship between First and Second Persons. Filiation is something that happens. Tertullian's account of this differs from Hippolytus' and, later, Marcellus of Ancyra's, who both envisage sonship as apparently coming with incarnation itself, and not with creation.⁶³ Nevertheless the idea that filiation is an occurrence causes considerable unease. If God-*Logos* is the primary relationship, then would the Trinity be primarily a community of love, holiness and personal relationship? For a God-*Logos* relationship seems more impersonal.

Yet Tertullian does not pursue this. Instead, what he emphasises in the trinitarian relations is precisely filiation. Thus the credal call of chapter 2 is in terms of the Second Person as Son. For Pollard, John's Gospel supports this. He comments:

⁶² *AgP* 7. Tertullian quotes Ps 45:1.

‘The regulative christological concept of the Gospel is not *Logos*, but *the Christ, the Son of God*.’⁶⁴ This apparently discloses a tension, if not a fault-line, in Tertullian’s thinking. Certainly, Tertullian produces grounds for preferring filial language, for denying the **Son** means neither having the Father nor life.⁶⁵ Tertullian insists on sonship for soteriological reasons.

However, this tension carries implications for the First Person as well as the Second. God is never without His *Ratio* or *Logos*. Otherwise he would impliedly be ἄλογος.⁶⁶ As noted earlier, Athenagoras asserts the eternal subsistence of the *Logos* partly because of what the First Person must have been from eternity.⁶⁷ Given a doctrine of God’s immutability and perfection, this is highly intelligible. However, logically Tertullian cannot see God’s fatherhood as eternal, for the *Logos* is not eternally son. The First Person becomes Father, indeed becomes so by his disgorged Son.⁶⁸ But soteriologically, to Tertullian, denying God’s fatherhood is theologically fatal.⁶⁹ This underlines both why Praxeas’ view appears so dangerous (it denies the First Person by denying the Second), but also that the tensions in Tertullian’s exposition apply not just to the Second Person, but also to the First.

Finally, this discussion highlights some slipperiness in terms like ‘economy’. The term’s range will be discussed further below.

⁶³ *AgN* 15.6 & 7. For Hippolytus, language apparently referring to sonship at an earlier stage is proleptic. For discussion see B. Capelle 1937:109-124 and Grillmeier 1975:116. For Marcellus see T. Pollard 1956-7:345.

⁶⁴ Pollard 1970:6-7.

⁶⁵ Starkest in *AgP* 31. Tertullian utilises I John 2:22, 4:15, and 5:9,12.

⁶⁶ Compare Hippolytus *AgN* 10.2.

⁶⁷ *Plea* 10.

⁶⁸ *AgP* 7.

⁶⁹ *AgP* 31.

3.3.3. *Tertullian and Terminology and Imagery*

In *Against Praxeas* 2 Tertullian deploys terminology and imagery of tremendous significance for his discussion. As regards terminology he gives three terms of unity as against three of diversity:⁷⁰

Unity	vs	Three-foldness
Status	vs	Gradus
Substantia	vs	Forma
Potestas	vs	Species

Structurally, chapter 2 introduces Tertullian’s argument, outlining points for later substantiation.⁷¹ Chapters 3-8 elucidate the first contrasting pair, *status* and *gradus*. As already observed, *status* appears in chapter three’s discussion of what overthrows the monarchy, where it refers to an independent rule or sovereignty with its own ‘standing’.⁷² This renders Moingt’s observation⁷³ that *status* suggests origin and independence more attractive than Evans’ stress⁷⁴ on *status* as existence.

Gradus emerges most strongly in chapters 7 and 8 where the Word’s prolation is described, first as *Ratio* within and with God, then as *Sermo* and *filius* in creation. In chapter 8, Tertullian describes this prolation with some recurrent imagery: root and shoot; spring and stream; and sun and beam. These cases share, for Tertullian, the

⁷⁰ Grillmeier 1975:125 notes other terms: of unity - *virtus*; of distinction - *persona*.
⁷¹ Note the observations of R. Sider 1971 on the careful structuring of Tertullian’s work. Tertullian’s terms clearly fall for examination but Bray rightly observes that analysis should finally focus on ideas rather than mere terminology Bray 1979:29.
⁷² The phrase *proprii status* is best taken as coloured by *alia dominatio suae condicionis*. The adjectives *alia*, *suae* and *proprii* all point to some separation between the two dominions.
⁷³ Moingt 1970:352-3.
⁷⁴ Evans 1944:52.

pattern of *origo* and *progenies*, hence their aptness for discussing a Father-Son relation. This stress on origin matches, of course, discussions of *status*. To have a relation of *gradus* for Tertullian requires origin without separation or division. In fact, more strongly, one cannot have *gradus* without origin. As such, three-foldness in terms of *gradus* does not deny unity but presupposes some form of it.

Some observations arise from this. First, the principle of unity is the Father, for he is the *origo* or *parens* of both Son and Spirit. Osborn acutely observes: ‘This Godhead is that of the Father, revealed in and by the others, as they are united with their first principle.’⁷⁵ As with the pattern of the monarchy, derivation becomes prominent. Since the Father is *origo*, attention naturally finally focuses on him. There is, again, patrocentricity.

This, however, is scarcely the usual characterisation of Latin trinitarian theology. Instead it strikingly resembles T. Weinandy’s formulation of so-called ‘Greek’ trinitarian theology: ‘The Father is the ultimate source both of the unity, and of the dynamic going forth of the Son and the Holy Spirit.’⁷⁶ Weinandy observes that ‘Greek’ thought is inclined to start with the Father’s monarchy,⁷⁷ but this is also true of Tertullian.⁷⁸

Secondly, these analogies could readily suggest that Tertullian is subordinationist ontologically. After all, a root can exist without a shoot. That, however, presses the analogy further than Tertullian envisages. He has observed

⁷⁵ Osborn 1997:117.

⁷⁶ Weinandy 1995:57.

⁷⁷ Weinandy 1995:57.

earlier that God is never without his *Ratio* and that, even when the *Ratio* is not breathed forth as *Sermo*, it remains distinct (chapter 5). Further, even in chapter 8, Tertullian apparently has an eternal relation in mind, for he says, relying on John 14:11, 1:1 and 10:30, that the Word is ‘always in the Father...and always with God... and never separate from the Father or other than the Father.’

Thirdly, these images help to clarify what *species* and *forma* mean. For in these images there is plurality of *species* without division, and plurality of *forma* but cohesion. The common factor, though, is that plurality of *gradus*, *species*, and *forma* does not constitute independence, for there is no independent origin and no independence arising from separation.

This latter consideration about separation merits emphasis. The imagery employed repeatedly stresses inseparability.⁷⁹ Inseparability matters for Tertullian in repelling charges of ditheism: the Son is not another god because he is not separate.⁸⁰ In contrast, Valentinian projection or emanation is noxious precisely because there is separation.⁸¹

This coheres with Tertullian’s use of *substantia*. For Stead, *substantia* is correctly seen primarily in a philosophical, rather than juridical, context.⁸² He notes Tertullian’s wide usage (in itself a caution against too procrustean a view of Tertullian’s vocabulary), but sees in *Against Praxeas* a predominant usage as ‘the

⁷⁸ Analytical problems related to a division between ‘East’/‘Greek’ and ‘West’/‘Latin’ are deferred to the chapter dealing with Augustine.

⁷⁹ *AgP* 18, 19, 21 and 22.

⁸⁰ *AgP* 18.

⁸¹ *AgP* 8.

⁸² Stead 1963:46, following Evans 1944:38.

unique stuff which is, or composes, the divine corpus and which Tertullian denotes *spiritus*.⁸³ However, *una substantia* again seems to function to deny independence to Son and Spirit. Thus in chapter 13 Tertullian asserts the Persons are distinct, and once again uses the analogy of sun and beam forming two objects of one undivided substance. Monotheism is preserved because there are not two independent suns. Otherwise, the monarchy would be threatened because, on analogy with the reasoning of *Against Praxeas* 3 and *Against Hermogenes* more generally, God's supremacy would vanish.

Turning to *potestas*, this naturally lies close to concepts of monarchy and sovereignty. More specifically, Tertullian uses this when underlining that the Son's power originates from the Father.⁸⁴ There is then one 'power', the Father's, which he hands in full to his Son, which the Son exercises, but not as an independent sovereignty, for the Son is to return power to the Father (chapter 4, utilising 1 Corinthians 15:27f).⁸⁵ Again, independence is critical: if the Son has an independent power, the Father is not supreme and therefore is not truly God.⁸⁶

3.3.4. *Tertullian and Exegesis of John's Gospel*

Tertullian's exegesis and handling of scripture has received mixed reviews. For some he is a methodologically sound exegete, disinclined to over-allegorise.⁸⁷ Yet suspicion also lingers that Tertullian does not always meet his exegetical aims.

⁸³ Stead 1963:62. Reiterated Stead 1977:203.

⁸⁴ *AgP* 4, 16 and 17.

⁸⁵ *Virtus*, another unity term, is used similarly at the close of ch. 22 when discussing the unity of operation of Father and Son in the works of the Son.

⁸⁶ Discussion of *oeconomia* is deferred until Tertullian's guiding principles are considered.

⁸⁷ E.g. R. Hanson 1961:275f.

In the present case, of course, his aim is less to provide a complete commentary or homiletical series on John but to deal extensively with the Gospel providing Praxeas' group with its New Testament textual proofs: John 10:30 and 14:9-11.⁸⁸ Tertullian's account of the Gospel is perforce strongly polemical, but still quite lengthy. Chapters 21-25 deal almost exclusively with the Gospel and questions arising from it. The Gospel, though, is dealt with unevenly in that unequal space is devoted to different sections. There is a clear concentration around these *loci*:

1. John 1:1-18, a dominating section in chapters 5-8, although combined with other texts.
2. John 5:17-43 in the latter half of chapter 21.⁸⁹
3. John 10:30 in the latter half of chapter 22.
4. John 11, especially vv. 41 and 42 in the first half of chapter 23.
5. John 12:28-30 and 44-49 in the second half of chapter 23.
6. John 14:5-11 in chapter 24.

This is most readily explained because Tertullian must, first, deal with 'Praxeas' texts, and, secondly, introduce his own material to refute their claims. That suggests, further, that Tertullian envisages John 1:1-18, 5:17-43 and 11-12 as significantly supporting his monarchy-in-economy model. Tertullian's unequal treatment could, of course, risk distorting the text.

Tertullian's over-riding aim must be to show, first, personal distinction between Father and Son, but, second, that the Son is not independent of the Father, and has no *alia dominatio*. Otherwise the monarchy is lost. Tertullian's exegesis consistently serves this dual aim.

⁸⁸ *AgP* 20.

Turning, then, to John 1:1-18, Tertullian frequently uses this,⁹⁰ but deals predominantly with the first three verses. These establish several things for Tertullian. First, John 1:1 demonstrates a duality of persons: there is one who was and another ‘within whom’⁹¹ he was.⁹² Tertullian has glossed the *apud quem* of his quotation (translating, of course, πρὸς τὸν θεόν) as *penes quem* in his comment.

Tertullian’s duality point is in itself unexceptionable,⁹³ but he has grafted onto it his distinctive *Logos* theology whereby the Word was not merely with God but within God: God has with him (*secum*) the Reason (*Ratio*) he has within Him (*in semetipso*).⁹⁴ Psalm 45:1 in particular is cited in support. There are clear New Testament grounds for taking the psalm at least partly christologically,⁹⁵ but verse 1 less obviously demands a christological reference. Moreover, while *apud* could well denote ‘in the presence of’ or ‘within/in the house of’, *penes* in fact seems more restrictive, suggesting more clearly ‘within’.⁹⁶ There is an irony here. ‘Within’ language, perhaps, tends to undercut personal distinction, the point Tertullian wishes to make. It is certainly not clear that a relationship ‘with’ is exactly coterminous with a relationship ‘within’. Brown sees a ‘nuance of relationship’ in πρὸς τὸν θεόν,⁹⁷ and while this might not be precisely stated in John 1:1b, Tertullian’s gloss risks obscuring this possibility.

⁸⁹ It is striking that here Tertullian simply quotes extensively from John 5, rather than taking a relatively brief phrase, his more normal pattern. This extensiveness suggests the passage’s significance.

⁹⁰ Citations from the Prologue occur some 18 times. Precision is hard to attain because some phrases may echo and draw conceptually on the Prologue without explicit quotation.

⁹¹ Evans’ 1944 translation.

⁹² *AgP* 13 *unus qui erat, et alius penes quem erat*.

⁹³ E.g. Ridderbos 1997:24 speaks of v. 1 showing the Word as ‘a being distinct from God’.

⁹⁴ *AgP* 5.

⁹⁵ Ps 45:6f is used of Christ in Heb 1:8f.

⁹⁶ Or even ‘in the possession/power of’.

⁹⁷ R. Brown 1971 I:5.

It is, however, easy to see why Tertullian might so gloss 1:1b. The bald proposition that the Word was simply ‘with’ God might imply two eternal principles, essentially independent of each other. This conclusion might especially be drawn given 1:1c, that the Word is God. Tertullian rejects just such a duality of independent eternal principles in *Against Hermogenes* as inconsistent with biblical monotheism.

However, other aspects of Tertullian’s thought could relieve this pressure. For Tertullian, in creation and salvation history the Word is clearly no longer ‘within’ God, but has been breathed forth. This establishes that there can be a non-independent relationship between eternal Persons which is not ‘within’. A rigorous correlation of economic and immanent trinities would perhaps diminish the pressure to gloss *apud* as *penes*.

The second point established from John 1:1-3 is that the Word creates,⁹⁸ indeed creates all. Brown observes that this suggests Jesus has ‘a claim on all’,⁹⁹ which is perfectly consistent with Old Testament linkage of sovereignty with creative activity. This creative activity is, though, carefully contextualised by Tertullian as creation at the Father’s behest. Thus chapter 12 talks repeatedly of the Father ‘ordering’ (*iubeo*).¹⁰⁰ Again, this expands John 1:1-3.

The need to preserve the monarchy undergirds this: the Word cannot be a creator independent from God - that approaches Marcionism. Rather creation especially must be an activity of both, not the separable operation of the Son.

⁹⁸ *AgP* 2, 7, 12, 16, and 19.

⁹⁹ Brown 1971 I:25. Compare Ridderbos 1997:36.

Justification emerges in particular from Old Testament wisdom sources, especially, of course, Proverbs 8:22-30.¹⁰¹ Given Tertullian's views about biblical authority and unity, this is methodologically unexceptionable. However, again one notes the possible significance of salvation history. Tertullian, notably in discussing John 5, will go on to observe the Son's dependence in obedience in the Incarnation. This could suggest that all the Son's actions, in creation, as well as in the Incarnation, are in obedient dependence on the Father's will.

The third point Tertullian draws from John 1:1-3 is that the Word is uncreated.¹⁰² *In principio erat sermo* is to be understood eternally. Exegetically this seems justified, for John 1:1ff seems not simply to paraphrase Genesis 1:1ff, but refers 'to something behind Genesis... to the Word and to the Word's existence with God "before the world was made"...'.¹⁰³ Tertullian anyway explicitly rejects interpreting Genesis 1:1 as saying that in the beginning God made for himself a son. This is justifiable both because John 1:1 itself contains no reference to the Word 'becoming' in the beginning,¹⁰⁴ but also because God is never without his Word but would have been, had the Word been a created being. Interestingly, chapter 5's denial that the Word was made is followed by a discussion focused more on God always having his *Ratio* than on the Word.

The fourth point is unsurprising after Tertullian's careful statement that the Word is both creator and uncreated: the Word is divine.¹⁰⁵ Tertullian here takes John

¹⁰⁰ Compare *AgP* 6.

¹⁰¹ Employed in *AgP* 6 and 7.

¹⁰² E.g. *AgP* 5 and 8.

¹⁰³ Ridderbos 1997:24.

¹⁰⁴ Contrast the 'became flesh' of 1:14.

¹⁰⁵ *AgP* 12.

1:1c at face value as asserting divinity, but not personal identification of the Word with the Father. He rejects straightforward identification for essentially contextual reasons: having concluded that John 1:1b contemplates a ~~divinity~~ and that creation (given Proverbs 8:22 etc) is conducted by two (or three) persons, he is well-placed to argue that consistency means identification is not required.¹⁰⁶

The fifth point drawn from the Prologue (particularly referring to 1:18) is that the Son makes the Father known.¹⁰⁷ A crucial point here is whether the Son makes the First Person known as he is in eternity or purely as he is in creation and salvation history. From one point of view, Tertullian possibly ought logically to argue that 1:18 does not talk about the First Person as he is in eternity. The verse is phrased in terms of the 'Father' not just 'God', and, as indicated earlier, fatherhood accrues to the First Person when the Word is begotten as Son. Again, this raises the issue of the revelatory significance of the Incarnation for the eternal relations of the godhead.

The next major *locus* of Tertullian's discussion, John 5, is dealt with largely by quotation.¹⁰⁸ From it Tertullian draws the distinction of persons, commenting on John 5:17: ' "My father and I" is what a son says'. This raises the genuineness of the relations which Jesus reveals, an important point to which we shall return.

Further, there is the extended quotation from John 5:19-27. This is left largely unexplained, but elsewhere John 5:19¹⁰⁹ and 22¹¹⁰ are used to indicate that the Son is

¹⁰⁶ The omission of the definite article with θεός in 1:1c militates against identification: e.g. Brown 1971 I:24.

¹⁰⁷ *AgP* 7 and 15.

¹⁰⁸ *AgP* 21.

¹⁰⁹ *AgP* 4 and 16.

¹¹⁰ *AgP* 16.

not acting independently, for he does nothing but what he sees the Father doing. This preserves the monarchy's integrity. However, the Father has delegated life and judgement to the Son, so that towards the created order the Son has the full powers of God, but as a delegate.

Here, if anything, Tertullian under-utilises the text. M. Stibbe comments in the light of 5:18 'The charge of equality with God is the paramount one.'¹¹¹ He is surely right to do so, for equality with God in the sense of being an independent, uncreated principle is just what the monotheism of e.g. Isaiah 40-55 would preclude. Tertullian would accept that. But 5:19ff is meant to be a defence to the charge of 5:18,¹¹² and achieves this by explaining that the powers of life/creation and judgement are delegated. These powers are, of course, the 'prerogative' powers of God, yet Jesus is here depicted virtually as *shaliach* or agent of the Father.¹¹³

On this view, 5:31ff continues the same thinking by pointing out that the Son's testimony (5:31) is not self-motivated nor independent of the Father,¹¹⁴ but actually consistent with the testimonies the Father himself supplies through the Baptist (5:33-5), the works Jesus does (5:36), and the Scriptures (5:38ff).

Thus John 5 provides further grist to Tertullian's mill simply because here Jesus confronts the charge that his claim to be Son, a distinct divine person, has broken the tenets of monotheism. Structurally, the chapter is crucial since it introduces the nature of conflict and rejection governing the rest of the Gospel. The

¹¹¹ Stibbe 1993:77.

¹¹² So J. Neyrey 1988:22-26 and Stibbe 1993:77ff.

¹¹³ See P. Borgen 1970:138ff for analysis of *shaliach* material.

¹¹⁴ Barrett 1978:220.

impulse to kill Jesus is put in terms of the filial claim (e.g. John 7 and 8). The pseudo-believers in chapter 8 are condemned for their own claim to be sons of God (8:41ff), while the 'Jews' claim Jesus' condemnation arises from his claim to be God's son (19:7).

Tertullian's next locus is John 10:30, an inevitable stopping-place given its use by Praxeas' group. Tertullian's argument is largely based on the precise terms of 10:30, especially the plural 'are' rather than the singular 'am' and the neuter *ἐν* rather than the masculine *εἷς*. To this extent Tertullian is discussing one 'thing'. Stibbe, following other, earlier, traditional exegesis, states this must be taken as claiming 'ontological equality'.¹¹⁵ Tertullian, though, sees a different emphasis, the unity of will between Father and Son. He comments, using 10:37, on the works that have been done, arguing that these are the Father's works, which the Son does in obedience.

This means that for Tertullian the operation of Father and Son is integrated. Obviously, this is already present in creating, but here it perseveres into the Incarnation. As such, the works of Father and Son are not the discrete works of two individuals, where each has his own sphere. That would be the pattern of 'Greek' polytheism. Further, this integrated operation involves the Father's priority: it is joint operation at the Father's behest, thereby preserving the integrity of the monarchy.

One response to this joint operation might be that Tertullian might have established only a unity of will without any ontological nexus (anticipating Arian exegesis).¹¹⁶ This restrictive view need not necessarily follow given the nature of

¹¹⁵ Stibbe 1993:118.

¹¹⁶ Referred to by Brown 1971 I:403.

certain works, notably the Sabbath healings of John 5 and 9 which are justified as Jesus exercising full divine prerogatives.

The next *locus* is John 11, especially vv. 41f, and 12:28-30 and 44-49.¹¹⁷ Tertullian again draws out the distinction of persons, since both chapters contain dialogue between Father and Son. Tertullian sees very clearly that either this reveals distinction or the Incarnation does not disclose the ‘reality’ of divine relations. Significantly, he rules out this latter alternative, which bears on his implicit view of ‘economic’ and ‘immanent’ trinities.¹¹⁸

The last *locus* is John 14:5-11. Tertullian has several reasons for rejecting the Praxean identification of Father and Son. First, by now Tertullian has accumulated from elsewhere in the Gospel material pointing to personal distinction. Secondly, he sees that the passage’s own terms fit poorly with Praxean views. Jesus is the way to the Father (14:6): one must believe Jesus is in the Father, not that Jesus is the Father (14:10): and both words and works ultimately originate in the Father (14:10). Thirdly, the idea that the seen Jesus is the Father breaches Tertullian’s fundamental tenet, that no-one has seen the first Person (Exodus 33:20 is again cited).¹¹⁹ However, much of chapter 24 in fact stresses the nature of the works. These works are the Father’s and Jesus is his *shaliach*, to use Borgen’s term.¹²⁰ This underlines a unity of operation opposed to polytheistic ideas of independent divine operations.

¹¹⁷ See *AgP* 23.

¹¹⁸ See below in 3.3.5.

¹¹⁹ See McCruden 2002:334 for the importance of this to Tertullian.

¹²⁰ Borgen 1970.

Tertullian's overall grasp of the Gospel is taken from the text itself. He cites John 20:31 to the effect that the Gospel is written that one may believe Jesus is the Son, and his exegesis of 'Father' and 'Son' prevents him interpreting this as meaning that we are to believe Jesus is the Father. However, he clearly reproduces (for example in dealing with John 14) the significance of knowing the Father specifically. This comparatively moderate use of John 20:31 is well-taken and provides a theocentric or patrocentric focus also adopted by some current commentators.¹²¹

On that basis, losing God's fatherhood has profound soteriological consequences, for the particular relationship we enter disappears.

3.3.5. Tertullian's Guiding Principles In Exegeting John

Several noteworthy features underlie Tertullian's exegesis. First, Tertullian's discussion of *logos/ratio* shows awareness of a species of argument from correlativity.¹²² He realises, with the Apologists, that denying that the *Logos* is eternal implies God was once ἄλογος. The relations enjoyed start to seem constitutive. The relation of Father and Son re-inforces this. Chapter 10 makes it abundantly clear that being a father means having a son to whom one is father. No son means no father either. Tertullian, then, recognises that correlativity applies to the Father-Son relation, but, let it be recalled, does not envisage it applying in eternity, for the Word becomes Son and God becomes Father.¹²³

¹²¹ For comments on the theocentric rather than simply christocentric nature of the Gospel see Barrett 1982:3. Note also L. Bouyer 1999:176 and, on the Prologue's theocentricity, R. Culpepper 1980:1ff.

¹²² *AgP* 5.

¹²³ *AgP* 7.

Secondly, there is God's immutability. This is most clearly asserted as following from God's eternity in chapter 27.¹²⁴ Indeed, La Cugna observes that part of the impetus behind Tertullian's assertion of personal distinction is to dissuade us from believing that the Father was born and suffered.¹²⁵ The doctrinal importance of the First Person to Tertullian must be stressed: true, there are several eternal Persons, but Tertullian has consistently upheld the First Person's monarchy and supremacy, and the Exodus 33:20 principle that he may not be seen.

Lastly, there is revelation. The weight of Tertullian's concern to provide a scriptural account of the Father-Son relation must be appreciated.¹²⁶ Tertullian acknowledges that with God all things are possible, but uses this to stress the centrality of revelation.¹²⁷ For we cannot argue that God could not do something (since nothing is impossible for him), but, since he has not done all things, we must examine carefully what he actually has done, that is, look to his self-revelation. Tertullian sees disregarding God's self-disclosure as having grave implications: that God is not true.¹²⁸ Tertullian argues that were God his own Son, he would have said so, for nothing would prevent him. He writes:

One thing however he was afraid of, to belie himself the author of truth, and to belie his own truth. And so, believing that God is true [*veracem*], I know that his statements are consonant with his ordinance, and his ordinance with his statements.¹²⁹

Comparable material emerges in chapter 23. While reviewing John 11 and 12, Tertullian remarks of the exchange between Father and Son in prayer that if there are

¹²⁴ *Ceterum deum immutabilem et informabilem credi necesse est, ut aeternum.*

¹²⁵ La Cugna 1991:28. Wiles 1961-1962:286 suggests this was also part of the momentum behind Origen's proposition of eternal generation.

¹²⁶ E.g. *AgP* 11 and 20. See R. Norris 1966:83.

¹²⁷ *AgP* 10.

¹²⁸ *AgP* 11.

¹²⁹ This crucial sentence reads: *et ideo veracem deum credens, scio illum non aliter quam disposuit pronuntiasse nec aliter disposuisse quam pronuntiavit.*

not really two, then God is a liar (*mendacem*). Instead, observes Tertullian, '[y]et in the economy itself it was the Father's will that the Son should be regarded as on earth, but himself in heaven.'¹³⁰ This is worth underlining. It is the will of the First Person that his Son be regarded and honoured (John 5:23). To resist the self-disclosure in the Incarnation is thus to oppose the Father's will, and is consequently an act of disobedience.¹³¹

This, of course, raises the question of the 'economy'. R. Markus distinguishes two prevalent interpretations of the word in Tertullian:¹³² first, as referring to the procession of the Persons as disclosed in 'the unfolding of the divine plan of salvation in the course of history'; secondly, as referring to 'the procession of persons in the godhead.'¹³³

The initial discussion in chapter 2 is on the basis of God having a Son, his Word, who proceeded from him. This focuses on the unfolding procession within creation and salvation history. The importance of salvation history is reinforced by chapter 11, where statements within salvation history are related to God's disposition,¹³⁴ and by chapter 23 where Jesus' prayer is part of the economy.

Yet chapters 5-8 go beyond this. The discussion, which Tertullian sees as dealing with the economy,¹³⁵ has included (notably in chapter 5) relations in eternity

¹³⁰ *Tamen in ipsa oeconomia pater voluit filium in terris haberi, se vero in caelis.*

¹³¹ Norris 1966:83.

¹³² Markus 1958:89f.

¹³³ Markus 1958:96.

¹³⁴ *Dispono* in ch. 11 is etymologically and conceptually related to *dispositio*. Markus 1958:96 fn. 1 comments on the synonymity (albeit not universal) to be found between *dispositio* and *dispensatio*.

¹³⁵ *AgP* 8.

between *Ratio* and God, *before* Discourse has been ‘disgorged’.¹³⁶ Such broadening of ‘economy’ is readily intelligible, since the economy matters to Tertullian precisely because it reveals in creation and salvation history the eternal truth of a plurality of persons. Unless it does so, Praxeas’ group remains effectively unrefuted. The distinction between the Persons of Father and Son would be a temporary expedient, or else, the worship of Jesus is finally revealed as infringing monolatry. Tertullian’s insistence on the reality of revelation prevents this, a reality grounded on God’s character as truthful. Hence the final casualty of Praxeian views held in the teeth of revelation in salvation history is God’s character: he is treated as not truthful.

This suggests that Tertullian closely links ‘economic’ and ‘immanent’ trinities. Yet the extent and stability of this require evaluation, a task to which we now turn.

3.4. Evaluation Of Tertullian’s Work

Estimates of Tertullian vary, and have done so from early times.¹³⁷ In terms of refuting Praxeas’ group, he has produced a biblically-based monotheism, centring on the notion of the Father’s sovereign supremacy, which can resist charges of ditheism. It retains sufficient virility as a monotheism to be consistent with his refutations of Hermogenes and Marcion. Moreover, not only does he rebut the charge of ditheism against orthodoxy, but he also reveals Praxeian thought as unscriptural, drawing out its consequences of demolishing the Incarnation as the revelation of God and of undermining salvation itself. In short, Praxeian theology defined monarchy otherwise than from the economy of creation and salvation history. In modern terms it is an

¹³⁶ McCruden 2002:330 likewise notes that Tertullian’s economy covers the inner life of the Trinity as well as history.

¹³⁷ Contrast Cyprian’s treatment of him as the ‘master’ with Hilary of Poitiers’ manifest distaste.

immanent theology of the godhead contradicting the economy. Hence Tertullian's opening remarks about a heresy arising from the unity.

Nevertheless, Tertullian's own account of the Father-Son relation is not without difficulty. 'Once the Son was not': at one level Tertullian would have to agree, for the Word was not always Son. Similarly, God was not always the Father: once the Father was not. Two reasons demonstrate the instability of Tertullian's position. First, his acceptance of correlativity over the Father-Son relation means the First Person changes: he becomes what he was not before. It is very hard to reconcile this with Tertullian's adherence to divine immutability rooted in God's eternity. The pressure is either to moderate monotheism to include changes in the First Person, or to relativise the importance of the Father-Son relation, prioritising instead the God-*Logos* relation. The difficulties in this have already been described.

Tertullian, secondly, has stressed the importance of the Incarnation as the revelation of trinitarian relations, thus drawing 'economic' and 'immanent' trinities together. But prioritising the God-*Logos* relation tends to detract from this. For, although it is clearly the *Logos* that is incarnate in John's Gospel, believers focus on the different relational categories of Jesus as the Son sent, and God as the sending Father who adopts believers as children. Tertullian himself takes precisely this approach in handling John 20:31.

Hence, two streams of development (at least) flow from Tertullian's positions. In one direction lies a stress on the Word becoming Son at creation. The difficulty here, perhaps, is avoiding subsequent collapse into a species of Arian thought. For it

is not clear that a definite personal distinction between God and *Logos* is really viable when the *Logos* is 'within' (*penes*) God. The stress there falls on the moment of the Son's prolation which, superficially at least, closely resembles the idea that once the Son was not. Therefore it is not hard to see why the stigma of ontological subordination clings to Tertullian's thinking,¹³⁸ even while ^{one} agrees with B. Piault that Tertullian does not intend to endorse the ontological inferiority for the Second and Third Persons.¹³⁹

The other direction lies in utilising more thoroughly principles that Tertullian already employs. He already uses correlativity to argue that the Second Person subsists eternally, thereby preserving the First Person's immutable perfection. His stress on the reality of revelation in creation and salvation history, based on God's truthfulness, permits him to predicate real personal distinctions in the godhead. But equally, the relationship stressed, especially in John's Gospel, is the Father-Son relationship. His position on the economic trinity of salvation history might well be extended logically to suggest the Father-Son relationship is equally eternal, just as the God-*Logos* relationship is. This avoids the theological awkwardness of 'once the Father was not', and also the problematic nature of a God-human relationship in which revelation in salvation history does not extend to God as he is truly in eternity. Arguably, Novatian takes just this step, and uses arguments similar to Tertullian's.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ E.g. Lampe 1997:56.

¹³⁹ Piault 1963:203.

¹⁴⁰ Novatian *Trinity* 31 'He is always in the Father, unless the Father be not always Father...' but later material in his chapter may mitigate this.

However, such a development involves a very specific idea of God's unity: it is monarchically based.¹⁴¹ For the Son would necessarily be in a position of ordered, although not ontological, subordination to the Father. This would follow for two reasons: first, because Tertullian's monotheism rests on the supremacy of a single person. Second, because this development of Tertullianist theology posits that the economic trinity reveals not just personal distinctions but the contours of the relations between those distinct Persons.

The corollary would be that egalitarian versions of the immanent trinity which feature Son and Spirit as independent Persons seem dissonant with the monotheism articulated by Tertullian. For in principle such versions resemble Marcionism. Moreover, Tertullian's position on revelation and the economy implies that such an egalitarian immanent trinity rejects revelation, precisely because the Father-Son relationship is patterned on obedience. Would Tertullian criticise such a position because, even if it accepts monotheism, it disbelieves in the economy of that monotheism as revealed in salvation history? He, of course, insists that the orthodox believe both.¹⁴² This highlights what B. Studer sees as a dominating concern,¹⁴³ the relation specifically between the events and revelation of the Incarnation on the one hand and the eternal trinitarian relations on the other. If the Incarnation discloses eternal relations (as Tertullian insists), what would justify positing different relational contours in eternity?

Further, if an egalitarian immanent trinity became an ordinal trinity in salvation history, would Tertullian feel God's immutability had been compromised?

¹⁴¹ Compare Rahner, whose preference for the Father's monarchy is noted by La Cugna 1991:215.

¹⁴² *AgP* 2.

This is difficult to assess since, as we have seen, Tertullian himself risks inconsistency on a similar point. Nevertheless, since eternity and immutability strongly feature in his general theology, grounds exist for thinking that Tertullianist monotheism lies uneasily with egalitarian versions over immutability.

3.5. Conclusions

Tertullian produces a relatively consistent monotheism extending beyond the polemical needs of *Against Praxeas*. This monotheism envisages full divinity as involving cosmic sovereignty exercised by an uncreated creator. This follows a Jewish-biblical pattern rather than the monotheisms of the Greco-Roman world. Tertullian's response in *Against Praxeas* is consistent with this because in Tertullian's account the Son is uncreated creator, but nevertheless constitutes no rival to his Father.

Critical to this position is Tertullian's use of derivation respecting the Son's own sovereignty: he reigns in his Father's kingdom. His obedience is an integral component. The Son is anyway not independent in substance, for derivation applies here too, although he is all that his Father is. This derivation is not ditheism since Father and Son are personally inseparable, and their actions in the world are united rather than resembling the polytheistic pattern of distinct spheres of influence. Father and Son are not a plurality of independent uncreated entities.

To show this approach is not just legitimate but necessary, Tertullian consistently relies on the data of the Incarnation. The revelatory value of this data

¹⁴³ Studer 1993:8.

rests ultimately on God's truthfulness. The revelation matters because we are saved by knowing Jesus as Son. Within that framework, egalitarian, immanent, trinitarian relationships of independent Persons seem inconsistent with monotheism and thus ditheistic or tritheistic.

However, Tertullian's own position is unstable because, for him, the primary relation the Incarnation discloses, Sonship, is not eternal. Nevertheless, his position could be logically developed towards stability by seeing the Incarnate relationship of Sonship as disclosing an eternal filial relation.

CHAPTER 4: ORIGEN AND THE SECOND GOD

It is proposed that:

4(a). Origen has three major parameters for trinitarian relations: the distinction of the Persons; the divinity of each Person; and the propriety in monotheistic terms of worshipping the Son and Spirit as well as the Father.

4(b). Significant problems arise for his trinitarian theology from his account of the distinction of the Persons. He provides three accounts of this, one proceeding from the Father, another proceeding from the Son, while the third relates to the analogies he uses to explain how two may be one.

4(c). In discussing the Father's personal distinction, Origen suggests the First Person alone is αὐτόθεος, relating in particular to his simplicity. This leaves him as God in isolation, and he is not distinguished by correlative relations.

4(d). Three consequences readily follow: first, relationality appears non-essential to the First Person, thereby almost rendering the Fatherhood epiphenomenal. Secondly, such a view of the First Person necessarily undermines the divinity of the other Persons: the Son clearly is neither simple nor αὐτόθεος. This imperils the other parameters of Origen's trinitarian thought, and ontological subordination is not far distant. Thirdly, the revelation of a simple Father by a multiple Son seems problematic.

4(e). In discussing the distinction from the starting-point of the Son, Origen sees the Son above all as Wisdom of God and his image. The Son derives what

he is from the Father, is eternal and incorporeal, and as image reveals his Father.

4(f). As image the Son is given the Father's authority and he implements the Father's will so that their operation is one.

4(g). This account of distinction is based on correlative relations. As such, it necessarily presupposes plurality of persons, and the Son appears necessary for the Father to be what he is. Some evidence suggests this might be developed towards consubstantiality.

4(h). Origen uses analogies to explain how two may be one but these turn characteristically on a union of wills in which independence appears logically prior to union: this has polytheistic tendencies.

4(i). Origen compares the divine union of wills to the union of the soul in Christ, itself an unstable union tending towards either the confusion of the natures or their fundamental independence.

4(j). The presence of three, not easily reconcilable, accounts of personal distinction makes it difficult either to approve or reject Origen's theology of trinitarian relations in toto: the material is disparate.

4.1 . A Presenting Issue

Origen: Is it true then that there was a God, the Son of God, the only begotten of God, the first born of all creation, and that we need have no fear of saying that in one sense there are two Gods, while in another there is one God?¹

Origen here poses a fascinating question to Heraclides, the bishop whose orthodoxy is under scrutiny. He uses ‘second God’ terms emphatically to test the bishop’s opinions,² and the bishop confirms his orthodoxy by answering ‘yes’ to Origen’s later question: ‘Do we confess two Gods?’³ For Origen, orthodox Christianity involves confessing there are, in a sense, two Gods. These terms are not to be surrendered because they are controversial (Origen notes some ‘take offence at the statement that there are two Gods.’),⁴ but elucidated and used.

Quite how Origen envisages that ‘the two are one God’⁵ will be pursued below. For present purposes it is worth observing why he thinks the question so important. He notes two errors to avoid, the Scylla of modalism that eliminates the Son as a distinct entity, and the Charybdis that denies his divinity. His account of the one-ness of the two Gods is designed to navigate between these perils:

In this way we avoid falling into the opinion of those who have been separated from the Church and turned to the illusory notion of monarchy, who abolish the Son as distinct from the Father and virtually abolish the Father also. Nor do we fall into the other blasphemous doctrine which denies the deity of Christ.⁶

Since the modalising tendency involves separation from the Church,⁷ and the denial of Christ’s deity constitutes blasphemy,⁸ Origen’s strong insistence that Heraclides affirm the ‘two Gods’ formula is readily intelligible.⁹

¹ *Dialogue with Heraclides* (hereafter *DH*) 122. References are to H. Chadwick’s translation.

² *DH* 122-124.

³ *DH* 124.

⁴ *DH* 124.

⁵ *DH* 124.

⁶ *DH* 128.

⁷ For the Church’s importance to Origen, see e.g. *On First Principles* (hereafter *OFP*). The translation used is G. Butterworth’s) Pref.

The problem, of course, is how Origen's 'second God' language does not sacrifice monotheism. He was certainly aware of this, not just because of disquiet within the Church,¹⁰ but also through interaction with those outside her who forcefully argued that his position was incoherent. Origen quotes Celsus as writing:

If these men worshipped no other God but one, perhaps they would have had a valid argument against the others. But in fact they worship to an extravagant degree this man who appeared recently, and yet think it is not inconsistent with monotheism if they also worship his servant.¹¹

Celsus here neatly raises two fundamental topics. First, monolatry: Celsus implies that monotheism should result in monolatrous practice, and Origen agrees that humans should worship God alone.¹² The second issue is Christ's identity: Celsus insists Christians worship a mere man.¹³

Origen is clear that Christians indeed worship a distinct Christ,¹⁴ but equally emphatic that this is consistent with biblical monolatry. For this to work, he must give, above all, a clear account of Christ's identity in relation to God. As such he adopts three parameters for his trinitarian discussion:

1. the full deity of all three Persons;
2. the distinction of all three Persons;
3. worship of three distinct, fully divine Persons is not inconsistent with monotheism.

⁸ *Commentary on John* (hereafter *CJ*) II.2 describes the two doctrines in question as 'false and wicked'. The translation used here is the *ANF*.

⁹ This concern appears elsewhere in very similar terms *CJ* II.2.

¹⁰ See *DH* 124.

¹¹ Origen's citation of Celsus' argument in *Against Celsus* (Hereafter *AgC*) VII.12. Chadwick's translation is used here.

¹² A recurrent theme in *AgC*: see I.11; V.4; compare III.15.

To investigate his trinitarian account, it is fruitful first briefly to consider questions posed by secondary literature about his trinitarian thought, and then examine his doctrines of God the Father, of the Son, and finally his thinking on the Father-Son relation with respect to subordination.

4.2. Questions Posed About Origen's Trinitarian Theology

Chadwick describes the view that Origen is 'a perennially enigmatic and embarrassing figure in the history of Christian thought'.¹⁵ It is not difficult to see why: he has been associated with particular later doctrinal developments, Arianism¹⁶ and Evagrius' extreme christology,¹⁷ both of which were condemned by ecumenical councils.¹⁸ Criticism of Origenism has not been confined to these issues, but both, notably, relate to a central issue of this chapter, Christ's identity. It is worth here recalling more general misgivings about Origen's trinitarian theology.

4.2.1. *A Platonising Trinity?*

This prominent and important charge suggests Origen's trinitarian account essentially provides a platonic hierarchy. Fortman comments representatively:

Origen tried to build a harmonious synthesis of strict monotheism and a Platonic hierarchical order in the Trinity - and failed.¹⁹

This charge underlines the suspicion that Origen is over-committed to, in essence, Middle Platonism, with its arguably negative views of physical existence and

¹³ The charge Origen quotes in *AgC* VIII.14 implies worship of Jesus was a human invention, not response to God's will.

¹⁴ E.g. *AgC* VIII.26.

¹⁵ Chadwick 1966:123.

¹⁶ Chadwick 1966:95 quotes George Scholarius.

¹⁷ Described by J. Meyendorff 1983:26.

¹⁸ Nicaea 325 and Constantinople II 553: on the christological issues note especially anathemata 1, 7 and 8.

¹⁹ E. Fortman 1972:56.

creation, and its alleged tendencies to monistic Idealism.²⁰ If so, the result would arguably be inauthentic Christian trinitarianism.²¹

The question here is whether Middle Platonism (and some of its Stoic associations) was for Origen basically a useful vehicle for a fundamentally orthodox position, or whether his orthodoxy was compromised by the alien system. Kannengiesser argues powerfully for the former.²² For him, Origen's great work *On First Principles* uses trinitarian thought as an organising idea, a three-fold pattern drawn, despite its Middle Platonic dress, from Scripture.²³

Notwithstanding such sympathetic readings by Kannengiesser and others,²⁴ over-commitment to Middle Platonism is strongly linked with other concerns, for it may provide conditions in which other problems flourish.

4.2.2. *Subordinationist?*

F. Cross is trenchant:

‘[Origen's] doctrine of the Godhead could not commend itself permanently to Christian thought on account of its subordinationism.’²⁵

For Cross this is linked to the way Origen consistently depicts Christ as the image of God in a way falling short of full equality,²⁶ Arguably the apparently different scopes of power and rule envisaged for the three Persons in *On First Principles* I.3.5 support

²⁰ A. Harnack 1970:195 remarks ‘..in him a Christian soul was joined to a Hellenistic intellect.’

²¹ Only arguably inauthentic, because some would say that any platonising in Christian belief was a Providential gain rather than an erroneous distortion of the original deposit of faith.

²² C. Kannengiesser 1988:237f.

²³ Kannengiesser 1995:351. Kannengiesser 1988:242f suggests Origen may have adopted an established form of discussion for Christian purposes. The relevant parallel is Albinus.

²⁴ Notably H. Crouzel 1989 (esp. 159 for Origen's independence of Middle Platonism); J. Kelly 1977:128 and H. von Balthasar 1984:14.

²⁵ Cross 1960:134.

²⁶ Cross 1960:128.

this.²⁷ Ontological subordination could well arise from overcommitment to platonic thinking. The crucial similes from *The Republic*, the Sun, the Divided Line and the Cave,²⁸ all feature a hierarchy of being culminating (in the similes of the Sun and the Cave) in a unitary point, the Form of the Good.²⁹ In the simile of the Sun, even the Ideas are, in a sense, ontologically subordinate.³⁰

Nevertheless, it is not presently universally conceded that Origen unequivocally argues for ontological subordination. Fortman notes evidence tending both ways and concludes that Origen's thought contains non-subordinationist tendencies.³¹ More strongly, Crouzel argues that the notorious I.3.5 passage from *On First Principles* deals, not with ontological subordination, but with the appropriation of trinitarian activity to different spheres of life.³² Hence some argue that Origen features economic rather than ontological subordination.³³

4.2.3. *Binitarian?*

Another charge is that Origen's pneumatology is exiguous. Fortman writes: 'The status and the origin of the Holy Spirit baffled Origen.'³⁴ In support one may note that Origen insists the Son is worshipped along with the Father,³⁵ but the Spirit's omission is at least curious, and possibly telling. Again, some Middle Platonic themes could tend to binitarianism. Both Eudorus and Plutarch favour dyadic structures of

²⁷ Other interpretations exist: see below.

²⁸ *Republic* 507a-517e.

²⁹ The Divided Line is not inconsistent with this final unitary apex.

³⁰ *Republic* 509b-c.

³¹ Fortman 1972:56.

³² Crouzel 1976:110.

³³ Thus K. McDonnell 1994:19, 29.

³⁴ Fortman 1972:57.

³⁵ E.g. *AgC* VIII.26.

reality, which is eminently intelligible in view of Plato's Craftsman contemplating the realm of eternal Ideas.³⁶

Against this, *On First Principles* Pref. 4 stresses that the apostles taught 'the Holy Spirit is united in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son.'³⁷ Further, the structure of *On First Principles* emphasises the Spirit in allocating a chapter to him immediately after dealing with God the Father and the Son. This is doubly significant if Crouzel correctly sees *On First Principles* I.3.5. as discussion of appropriation amongst divine Persons.³⁸

4.2.4. The Trajectories Of Origen's Thought

Origen's association with the paths leading to Arianism and Evagrian christology has been noted earlier. This relates to a central difficulty with Origen: systematising his thought. M. Harl justly remarks that Origen possesses an extraordinarily complex view and that his works must be read as a whole, without attaching anachronistic meanings to his terms.³⁹ One may add three further observations. First, the systematic connections within Origen's thinking, while not simply absent, may not always be clearly articulated. Harl catches this well: Origen has a '...système cohérent sinon organisé'.⁴⁰

Secondly, Origen characteristically multiplies insights. Thus his commentaries may well set several views alongside each other. To quote Harl again 'La génie

³⁶ Other Middle Platonists may tend to a more triadic structure.

³⁷ Origen does not dispute this apostolic teaching. His questions in *OFP* Pref.4 relate to the Spirit's procession, whether the Spirit is begotten, and another Son of God or not. These tend to presuppose the Spirit's divinity.

³⁸ Crouzel 1976 esp. 110.

³⁹ Harl 1958:335.

d'Origène est un génie de surabondance. Il sent rarement le besoin de choisir...Il accumule.'⁴¹ This may perhaps detract from obvious logical consistency. Crouzel cautions 'The fact is that his thought is full of internal tensions and no text yields his thought precisely on a given point.'⁴²

Thirdly, some of Origen's major work was occasional. *Against Celsus*, a primary text for consideration, is, obviously, aimed at refuting Celsus. It contains much valuable argument about why 'monotheists' may legitimately worship the Word as well as the Father, but Origen's aim is not simply to provide a full explanation of the Father-Son relation. Similar polemical intentions surface in the *Commentary on John*: Origen's specific and frequent citation and refutation of Heracleon's views indicate these constitute a major target.⁴³ Even *On First Principles* is no dispassionate account of the entirety of Christian belief (although undeniably wide-ranging). Book III argues strongly for freewill against the determinism of Heracleon's doctrine of fixed natures (and quite possibly predestinarian strands in the beliefs of the 'simple'). Book IV also strongly defends allegorical readings of Scripture, which again may be against implied opposition from the 'simple'.

However, this occasional nature involves a risk of distortion if statements are taken as general propositions rather than as directed to a specific polemical question. As Crouzel notes, even in *On First Principles* Origen produces no specific

⁴⁰ Harl 1958:333.

⁴¹ Harl 1958:352.

⁴² Crouzel 1989:49.

⁴³ Note in particular J. Trumbower 1989:139 who suggests Heracleon's exegesis touched a nerve for Origen. By advocating fixed natures, Heracleon undercut the human freedom Origen thought essential in cosmic restoration (Compare *OFP* III.5.8).

adjudication on some questions.⁴⁴ There is thus something problematic about Fortman's description of *On First Principles* as '...the first *Summa* ever composed in the Church' and as Origen's attempt '...to systematize all his doctrine'.⁴⁵

Thus dangers exist in straightforwardly attributing tendencies to Origen's 'theology'. Some elements show he is not simply incorporating platonic thought. His explicit debt is both to Scripture, and, importantly, the Church's tradition.⁴⁶ Implicitly, he is no 'simple platonist', given his insistence on the scandal, platonically speaking, of the Word made flesh. Evagrius, for example, may indeed develop authentic Origenist emphases. It is quite different to assert that Origen himself would have agreed with Evagrius, or that Origen's christology had only the tendencies Evagrius saw. Origen's work, as Harl observed, is such that it contains perhaps not one but several theologies, whose mutual relationships are unarticulated and thus obscure: 'Il accumule.'⁴⁷

4.2.5. *Economic And Immanent?*

One further question about Origen's trinitarianism merits attention: the role of the economic trinity. Reference was made earlier to the defence of Origen against ontological subordination. McDonnell in particular argues that subordinationist language relates to the economy rather than to ontology.⁴⁸ This opens the way to a more positive evaluation of Origen's trinitarianism. If absolved of ontological subordination, he is also often credited with postulating the Son's eternal generation,

⁴⁴ Crouzel 1989:46.

⁴⁵ Fortman 1972:54.

⁴⁶ On the latter, note *OFP* pref. 2.

⁴⁷ Harl 1958:352.

⁴⁸ McDonnell 1994, drawing on the analysis of Crouzel 1976 of *OFP* I.3.5.

rooting a genuine trinity in eternity.⁴⁹ However, this does raise the question of the relation between economic and immanent trinities in Origen, which in turn necessarily relates to his Christology.

4.3. Origen's Doctrine Of God The Father

Sustained discussion of God occurs in *On First Principles* I.1. Origen asserts that:

1. God is incorporeal (I.1.1-4);
2. God is immeasurable (I.1.5);
3. God is incomprehensible (I.1.5,6), although clues about him are observable in the world he has created (I.1.6.); and
4. God is simple (I.1.6.)

Similarly in *Against Celsus* God's true nature is described as '...entirely incorruptible, simple, uncompounded, and indivisible.'⁵⁰ These descriptions do not necessarily reflect platonised conceptions of God, but are readily intelligible when set against platonising theologies. In an atmosphere where corporeality has negative connotations, incorporeality is an apt starting point,⁵¹ for it is associated with immunity from corruption and change. In that way, God's incorporeality relates to that recurrent question of classical and Hellenistic philosophy, Being and Becoming. Incorporeality means God exists as pure being. However, within platonising epistemologies knowability is linked to being rather than becoming. Hence

⁴⁹ Fortman 1972:55 citing *OFP* I.2.6.

⁵⁰ *AgC* IV.14.

⁵¹ Widdicombe 1994:13 sees incorporeality as God's most basic characteristic in Origen.

incorporeality safeguards God's knowability in such a framework.⁵² The descriptions of *On First Principles* and *Against Celsus* reflect a common agenda in slightly different terms.

However, incorporeality and its implication of knowability stand in some tension with God's immeasurability. After all, immeasurability implies incomprehensibility, for what cannot be measured cannot be known. Origen returns to the conundrum of knowing the infinite when later discussing the Son as image.⁵³ The Son, however, does know the Father,⁵⁴ obviously a highly significant indication of the Son's identity.

Both passages speak of God as simple and uncompounded. Several writers stress Origen's commitment to simplicity,⁵⁵ and it repays attention. *On First Principles* I.1.6 reads:

...[B]ecause our mind is of itself unable to behold God as he is, it understands the parent of the universe from the beauty of his works and the comeliness of his creatures.

God therefore must not be thought to be any kind of body, nor to exist in a body, but to be a simple intellectual essence, admitting in himself of no addition whatever, so that he cannot be believed to have in himself a more or a less, but is Unity, or if I may say so, Oneness⁵⁶ throughout, and the mind and fount from which originates all intellectual existence or mind. ...⁵⁷

⁵² Widdicombe, amongst others, notes the association between ontology and knowability in platonising thought 1994:18.

⁵³ *OFP* I.2.8.

⁵⁴ *OFP* I.1.8.

⁵⁵ Cross 1960:128, Pollard 1958:107, Widdicombe 1994:24.

⁵⁶ Rufinus retains *Μονάς* and *Ἑνός* for 'Unity' and 'Oneness'.

⁵⁷ It has been questioned whether Origen means the Godhead in its entirety (so e.g. Fortman 1972:55) or the Father when he writes 'Unity, or if I may say so, Oneness'. It is best taken as primarily referring here to the Father since structurally *On First Principles* I.1. apparently deals with the First Person. Within I.1.6. itself, the Father is the subject of the immediately preceding sentences, and there is no clear movement to discussion of all three. Moreover, Origen later argues in I.2.2 for the Son's incorporeality. This would be redundant were I.1. discussing the Godhead generally. Further, it is doubtful whether Origen could be so emphatic without further explanation that the Godhead was 'simple', for he stresses that the three Persons really are distinct (E.g. *DH* 122 and *CJ* II.2.). However, such real distinctions do not obviously harmonise with simplicity, because simplicity precludes further division. Even if 'simplicity' were attributed to the Godhead because of the *homoousion*, this would

Divine simplicity functions in several ways in Origen. First, it provides an ultimate point of origin, from which all else derives. This emerges later in I.1.6:

But God, who is the beginning of all things, must not be regarded as a composite being, lest perchance we find that the elements, out of which everything that is called composite are composed, are prior to the first principle himself.

Divine simplicity reflects another stock concern of Hellenistic philosophy.⁵⁸

Divine incorporeality safeguarded God's unchanging nature by 'locating' him in the realm of Being rather than Becoming, while divine simplicity helps address the perennial question of the One and the Many. It safeguards the unitary nature of reality since there is one single focus or source of being - as in the simile of the Sun.⁵⁹

The rationale is that, as First Principle, God must be simple.⁶⁰ Here 'simple' means primarily 'undivided'.⁶¹ The passage indicates that if the First Principle could be divided, then those elements into which it was divided would be more fundamental. However, God alone enjoys indivisibility.⁶² God's simplicity thus has a compound connotation, comprising indivisibility and uniqueness.⁶³

Secondly, there is an element of participation. God's simplicity in his intellectual nature is the beginning of all intellectual nature, in which humans and angels (and very possibly demons) share.⁶⁴ Again, the Form of the Good in Plato's

not, it seems, have been transparent to Origen's readers. Yet he states the simplicity point as needing little explanation.

⁵⁸ *Republic* 507a-509e.

⁵⁹ *Republic* 507a-509e.

⁶⁰ Widdicombe 1994:24.

⁶¹ G. Stead 1977:182 suggests that in this period 'simplicity' was used for two distinct concepts: (a) unique and (b) undivided.

⁶² R. Berchman 1984:124 notes Origen's simple God is 'radically different from all others [sc. Types of beings]'.
⁶³ Stead 1977:183 observes that such thinking tends to be over-eager to assimilate the two senses.

⁶⁴ Incorporeality subserves this. For *OFP* I.1.6 shows corporeality inhibits the intellectual function. This implies that God's incorporeality is a condition for the perfect functioning of his intellectual nature.

simile of the sun is strikingly similar. God in his simplicity is a noetic unity who is the ‘... “ground” of the whole noetic world’.⁶⁵

The Platonic influence is strong in other ways too. Thus God transcends mind and being.⁶⁶ Obviously this can generate trinitarian tensions: how can the First Person transcend all else without suggesting subordinationism ontologically?⁶⁷

Finally, there is the First Person’s monarchy. The Father’s omnipotence is clear,⁶⁸ and, while the Son serves the Father in creating the cosmos,⁶⁹ he shares this fully.⁷⁰ There is, then, but one power at work,⁷¹ to one final end.⁷² As with Tertullian, the Son is a genuine plenipotentiary, not acting independently of the Father, but in unanimity with his will.⁷³ As with Tertullian, this argues against ditheism for there is no alternative empire. However, Origen’s divine monarchy is distinctive in being consistent with human freewill, and therefore persuasive rather than coercive.

Two things stand out. First, the strong affinity with platonic thought, not just with the *Republic* but also with the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*.⁷⁴ Secondly, the First Person is described in strongly non-relational terms. Incorporeality, immeasurability and simplicity are not *prima facie* relational attributes. Thus Berchman perceptively comments that the Father is only πρὸς αὐτό [sic] while the

⁶⁵ Berchman 1984:125.

⁶⁶ *AgC* VII.38. For the transcendence of the Form of the Good, see *Republic* 509a-c.

⁶⁷ Stead 1977:187 notes the danger.

⁶⁸ *OFP* I.2.10; II.3.7; II.9.6. Compare *AgC* VIII.11.

⁶⁹ *OFP* pref.4.

⁷⁰ *OFP* I.2.10.

⁷¹ *OFP* II.1.2.

⁷² *OFP* II.1.2.

⁷³ *AgC* VIII.12.

⁷⁴ Berchman 1984:153.

Son and the Spirit are πρὸς τι.⁷⁵ *On First Principles* I.1. largely analyses the Father with little reference to his fatherhood.⁷⁶

The question of relation is indeed problematic. One reason inclining Middle Platonic thought to solutions involving two *hypostaseis* solutions, such as the *Parmenides* adumbrated, was precisely that the First Hypostasis could remain simple since the plurality of ideas lay elsewhere.⁷⁷ Likewise the First Person is simple in that the plurality of ideas lies elsewhere (in the Son). But obviously if the First Person is aware he is Father, he is presumably aware of himself as Father and of the Son as his Son. Plurality and awareness of it thus seem inescapable, and fit but poorly with this version of simplicity.

Thus, while Origen provides material for seeing the Persons as distinct, and as one in rule, which aligns closely with notable understandings of biblical monotheism,⁷⁸ an outstanding question relates to the full deity of Son and Spirit, given his portrayal of the Father's uniqueness. It is, though, to the Son that attention now turns.

⁷⁵ Berchman 1984:153. Considered further below when dealing with the Father alone being αὐτόθεος.

⁷⁶ There is some, notably in the discussion about knowing God *OFP* I.1.8, and elsewhere Origen dwells more directly on the Father's personal relations. Nevertheless, sustained discussion in *On First Principles* weights things in this particular way.

⁷⁷ Compare J. Feibleman 1959:155.

⁷⁸ E.g. Bauckham 1998.

4.4. Origen's Doctrine Of God The Son

This is perhaps best considered by dealing with Origen's presentation of the Son, first, in eternity, and, second, in the Incarnation. This reflects the order of *On First Principles* and permits special considerations to emerge that may flow from Origen's views of the Incarnation.

4.4.1. The Eternal Son

Having dealt with the First Person in *On First Principles* I.1, Origen proceeds to the Son in I.2. The chapter's structure is interesting. In I.2.1-4, Origen lists a series of the Son's titles: wisdom; power of God;⁷⁹ the Word of God;⁸⁰ Truth; Life; Way; and Resurrection.⁸¹ He draws from this the principle that the Son derives what he is from the Father,⁸² which notably entails incorporeality and eternity. He then furnishes scriptural support for these propositions in I.2.5-13.⁸³ Sustained discussion focuses on three texts: Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3 and Wisdom 7:25-26,⁸⁴ which he explores in order: Colossians 1:15 in I.2.6, Hebrews 1:3 in I.2.7 and 8, and Wisdom 7:25-26 in I.2.9-13.

Origen is strikingly concerned here with Jesus' titles, something also evident in the *Commentary on John* I.⁸⁵ Scholarship rightly emphasises this concern.⁸⁶ The

⁷⁹ Both in I.2.1.

⁸⁰ I.2.3.

⁸¹ The latter four from I.2.4.

⁸² *OFP* I.2.2.

⁸³ For Origen's doctrine of revelation, see Appendix 2.

⁸⁴ I.2.5.

⁸⁵ *CJ* I.11 again has a list followed by explanation. It lists the Son as: life, light, truth, way, resurrection, door, wisdom, power of God, Word, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

⁸⁶ E.g. Harl 1958:121f; G. Lampe 1997:77; A. Grillmeier 1975:164.

multiplicity of titles reflects how the Son benefits people in their different stages of maturity and development.⁸⁷

However, Wisdom seems somehow anterior to the other titles. *On First Principles* I.2.1-3 primarily emphasises the Son as Wisdom. Similarly in the *Commentary on John*, Origen comments while exegeting John 1:1a:

And so one might venture to say that wisdom is anterior to all the thoughts that are expressed in the titles of the first-born of every creature.⁸⁸

Origen takes the ἀρχή in the light of Proverbs 8:22: κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, and concludes John 1:1a means that the Word was in an ἀρχή, namely Wisdom.⁸⁹ Such an interpretation readily suggests the priority of Wisdom in considering the Son, and this requires further attention.

The stress on the Son as Wisdom is evident in Origen's exegesis of John 1:1a. Creation is certainly by the Word at the Father's behest,⁹⁰ but, for Origen, creation and its multiplicity reflects the thoughts of, specifically, Wisdom. Thus:

Consider, however, if we are at liberty to take this meaning of *arche* for our text: "In the beginning was the Word," so as to obtain the meaning that all things came into being according to wisdom and according to the models of the system which are present in his thoughts. For I consider that as a house or a ship is built and fashioned in accordance with the sketches of the builder or designer, the house or the ship having their beginning (*arche*) in the sketches and reckonings in his mind, so all things came into being in accordance with the designs of what was to be, clearly laid down by God in wisdom. And we should add that having created, so to speak, ensouled wisdom, He left her to hand over, from the types which were in her, to things existing and to matter, the actual emergence of them, their moulding and their forms.⁹¹

⁸⁷ *CJ* I.42 compare I.11.

⁸⁸ *CJ* I.22. Crouzel 1989:189 suggests the 'title Christology' derives from Wisdom. So too A. Meredith 1974:349.

⁸⁹ Origen is not alone, of course, in seeing echoes of Prov 8:22 in Jn 1:1a: see e.g. C. Barrett 1962:127. More striking is his understanding of the verbal coincidence of ἀρχή in both texts as indicating identification between ἀρχή and Wisdom.

⁹⁰ *OFP* I. Pref. 4.

⁹¹ *CJ* I.22.

Comparisons with Plato's proposal that physical creation is by reference to the Ideas readily arise.⁹² Certainly, differences exist. Thus the Ideas are now located 'internally' within the Second Person, Wisdom.⁹³ The rationale is clear: it obviates the need for multiplicity within the mind of the First Person. Thus it is unsurprising to find Origen continuing:

Now God is altogether one and simple; but our Saviour, for many reasons, since God set Him forth a propitiation and a first fruits of the whole creation, is made many things, or perhaps all these things; the whole creation, so far as capable of redemption, stands in need of Him.⁹⁴

This passage underlines that the variety of titles has salvific significance,⁹⁵ providing for souls at various stages of their development,⁹⁶ but again the point is Christ's multiplicity. Grillmeier rightly remarks that Origen presents the Son as 'an objective multiplicity', in contrast to the Father.⁹⁷

Yet this contrast does not arise from playing different 'parts' in a correlative relationship, as with the Father-Son relationship itself, where to be a Father presumes a Son.⁹⁸ Origen knows of, and uses, such correlative arguments,⁹⁹ but simplicity does not seem to entail multiplicity as a necessary correlate. The stock example in ancient philosophy is Parmenidean monism, where multiplicity is illusory.

However, Grillmeier does not perhaps fully develop the significance of the contrast between simple Father and multiple Son. Simplicity apparently distinguishes the Father from the Son. In terms of the 'second God' questions presented by the

⁹² *Timaeus* 28-29.

⁹³ So also Berchman 1984:119.

⁹⁴ *CJI*.22.

⁹⁵ A further difference from the *Timaeus* where salvation is not an issue in this way. However, this raises the question whether redemptive multiplicity is purely economic.

⁹⁶ *CJI*.11, 42. Noted by, amongst others, Grillmeier 1975:166.

⁹⁷ Grillmeier 1975:165.

⁹⁸ Origen speaks of the Son needing the Father in *OFP* IV.1.28.

Dialogue with Heraclides, simplicity indeed furnishes Origen with a principle of distinction. However, if simplicity is central to the First Person, but is not shared by the Son, does this distinction suggest that the Son is not fully divine, contravening another parameter of the *Dialogue*? A related question also arises: can the multiple Son reveal the Father in his simplicity?

Origen and Plotinus seem somewhat similar here. For Plotinus there might be difficulty in the completely simple One, contemplating Mind, which is multiple. For the differentiation of self-aware knower from what is known might imply a duality in the knower's mind which is inconsistent with full simplicity.¹⁰⁰ However, Origen insists that the Father and Son do know each other fully.¹⁰¹ This proposition is, though, drawn from a biblical datum, Matthew 11:27, rather than inferred from simplicity and multiplicity.

Turning to Origen's justifications for his central propositions about the Son in *On First Principles* I.2, he deals first with Colossians 1:15.¹⁰² His frequent citation of the verse indicates its importance to him.¹⁰³ Here, though, Origen transfers the epithet in the phrase 'image of the invisible God', so that what he actually discusses is the 'invisible image'.

Origen distinguishes two types of image. The first is a painting on a material such as wood or stone. The second is the child in whose features the parent's features

⁹⁹ E.g. *OFP* I.2.3.

¹⁰⁰ On Plotinus and the One, see chapter 2.

¹⁰¹ *OFP* I.1.8.

¹⁰² *OFP* I. 2. 6.

¹⁰³ It is used at *AgC* IV. 85; VI.63, 64, 69; VII.27; VIII.12, 17, where it plays a significant part in the various arguments.

are ‘in every respect faithfully reproduced’.¹⁰⁴ For Origen, the ‘image’ of Colossians 1:15 is the second, parent-child. This is hardly surprising. Origen carefully specifies that the first kind of image is formed on a material substance and a material image would hardly be consistent with the Son’s incorporeal deity, which Origen upholds.¹⁰⁵

By contrast, the parent-child alternative allows Origen to appeal to the model of fathers begetting sons of like nature to themselves, in their image in that sense. Origen comments of the son-as-image: ‘This image preserves the unity of nature and substance common to a father and a son’.¹⁰⁶ The true image of the invisible God must itself be invisible.

Origen justifies such likeness from the correspondence of action between Father and Son. The Son does what the Father does, reasons Origen from John 5:19. A difficult but important section then follows:

And on this account my own opinion is that an act of the Father’s will ought to be sufficient to ensure the existence of what he wills; for in willing he uses no other means than that which is produced by the deliberations of his will. It is in this way, then, that the existence of the Son also is begotten by him.

This point must above all be upheld by those who allow nothing to be unbegotten, that is, unborn, except God the Father only.¹⁰⁷

The destination of this argument in the final sentence relates to the Father’s uniqueness. This is further related to the sufficiency and centrality of the Father’s will in two respects. For, first, the Son’s actions are not merely similar to the Father’s, but are communal actions of both in which the Father’s will is done.¹⁰⁸ Since the Son

¹⁰⁴ *OFP* I.2.6.

¹⁰⁵ One of the ‘givens’ listed in *OFP* Pref.4.

¹⁰⁶ *OFP* I.2.6.

¹⁰⁷ *OFP* I.2.6.

¹⁰⁸ Compare *AgC* VIII. 12, where Col 1:15 is one supporting text cited.

executes the Father's will, his actions are the Father's. In this passage, though, secondly, the Son who implements the Father's will, is himself generated by that will.

This is not, though, to deny the Son's eternity. Origen has already argued that God is never without his wisdom¹⁰⁹ and was always Father.¹¹⁰ Since an incorporeal being is indivisible, this does not divide the divine, and the model of an act of will allows Origen to maintain a begetting without division '...as an act of will proceeds from the mind without either cutting off any part of the mind or being separated or divided from it...'.¹¹¹ Rather, there is an invisible Son beyond the senses even as the Father is, but who can reveal the Father. For the Father, his uniqueness as only unbegotten is preserved, as is the supremacy of his will.

By this stage, however, Origen has furnished support for a Son who is invisible and incorporeal as his Father is, two key points he outlined in I.2.1-4.

Origen then moves to Hebrews 1:3.¹¹² He uses the first phrase ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης to convey how the Son conducts us to God, drawing upon the light imagery suggested by ἀπαύγασμα. Given that God is light,¹¹³ the Son is the ἀπαύγασμα of this light. Here Origen applies the common image of brightness proceeding from light to the Father-Son relation.

We become accustomed by this brightness to the Light and are thus led by the Son to the Father. This light from light image allows Origen to speak of the Son

¹⁰⁹ *OFP* I.2.2.

¹¹⁰ *OFP* I.2.3.

¹¹¹ *OFP* I.2.6.

¹¹² *OFP* I.2.7 and 8.

‘proceeding from God without separation’.¹¹⁴ Thus the Son can be distinct without being separated.

Next, Origen develops the second phrase of Hebrews 1:3, *χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως*.¹¹⁵ He questions how there can be another *χαρακτήρ* besides God himself. His answer deals again with how the Son makes the Father known. Acknowledging its imperfections, he uses this analogy: suppose there was a statue of infinite size. Such a statue would be unknowable. However, a second statue of the same features and material would be an express figure of the first, because it had the same features, yet knowable because finite rather than infinite. Origen’s comparison likens the incarnate Jesus to the second, finite, knowable statue.

The structural position shows that this analogy is important, but, even allowing for Origen’s qualifications, it creates problems. First, Dillon notes this is a highly attenuated principle of revelation: the Son is ‘...still only an image of what we cannot see.’¹¹⁶

Secondly, the second statue lacks the first’s infinity. Yet Origen’s earlier description of God made infinity central.¹¹⁷ As a result, a central part of what makes God God cannot be reproduced by the Son considered as the second statue. Naturally, how a human being can reveal in his person an infinite God is a perennial problem, and is not unique to Origen, but the analogy raises it acutely.

¹¹³ I Jn 1:5.

¹¹⁴ *OFP* I.2.7.

¹¹⁵ *OFP* I.2.8.

¹¹⁶ Dillon 1988:226.

Thirdly, it is in similarity of action rather than personal resemblance that the incarnate Son reveals God:¹¹⁸

[The Son] gave indications, in the likeness of his power and works to those of God the Father, of the immense and invisible greatness that was in him...¹¹⁹

Fourthly, the statue analogy deals with revelation of the Persons considered singly and not the content or existence of their relationship. The acts of power in the Incarnation may suggest an extremely powerful, even omnipotent, God, but they do not *per se* indicate the Father-Son relationship. To bring that out, Origen would need to point out that the Son's actions do not merely resemble but are at the behest of the Father, and that the Son in the Incarnation does the Father's will. He uses this resource elsewhere, of course, employing John 5:19,¹²⁰ but not here.

Origen then moves to consider Wisdom 7:25-26:¹²¹

(25) ἀτμίς γάρ ἐστιν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως
καὶ ἀπόρροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης εἰλικρινής·
διὰ τοῦτο οὐδεν μεμιαμμένον εἰς αὐτὴν παρεμπίπτει.
(26) ἀπαύγασμα γάρ ἐστιν φωτὸς αἰδίου
καὶ ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας
καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος αὐτοῦ.

For Origen these verses are definitions, providing certain attributes of God.¹²² He develops the phrases in turn. The first, the breath of the power of God, is explained in terms of God's unlimited and eternal power. The Son is the one by whom God exercises his power and is eternal, for God always exercises his power. The

¹¹⁷ *OFP* I.1.5.

¹¹⁸ So too Harl 1958:115.

¹¹⁹ *OFP* I.2.8. Origen earlier remarks (*OFP* I.1.6) that the infinite and unknowable God can be grasped indirectly through his actions.

¹²⁰ E.g. *OFP* I.2.6.

¹²¹ *OFP* I.2.9ff. Irrespective of a christological interpretation, Wisdom 7:25f represent an exalted view of wisdom: L. Grabbe 1997:78 and J. Geyer 1963:87.

¹²² *OFP* I.2.9.

Son's eternity is defended because the Father's eternity and immutability demand it. Again, this supports a proposition from I.2.1-4, the assertion of the Son's eternity.

Immutability also guides Origen with the second phrase, 'Wisdom is the purest effluence of the glory of the Almighty'.¹²³ The Father did not 'become' παντοκράτωρ, for that would imply an increase in God, which is absurd. He always had objects over which to exercise his power.¹²⁴ That power is, though, exercised through the Son, Wisdom. Origen uses John 17:10 to illuminate this. Since the Father has given 'all' to the Son, this must include the Father's rule. The Son is consequently omnipotent too, for he shares fully with the Father. Nevertheless, Origen's account is 'monarchical': the Son has no independent authority to rival the Father.¹²⁵ A defining aspect of biblical monotheism is therefore preserved, albeit without the term 'monarchy'. This, then, is Jesus' glory, that He is co-wielder of the Father's omnipotent power, and its description as 'pure' shows it is unchangeable and incorruptible.

From the third phrase, 'brightness of the eternal light', Origen draws out eternity.¹²⁶ In Wisdom 7:26 'eternal' qualifies 'light' rather than 'splendour'. Origen transfers 'eternal' to 'brightness', presumably because a light without its brilliance is inconceivable,¹²⁷ so that, if the light is eternal, so is its brilliance. However, 'eternity' is usefully glossed here as meaning without beginning or ending.¹²⁸ The relation of 'brightness' to 'light', though, emphasises that the Son's existence is derived. Again,

¹²³ *OFP* I.2.10.

¹²⁴ Hence the view that Origen endorses an eternal creation; Crouzel 1989:206, however, argues that Origen only endorses the world of Ideas as co-eternal with God.

¹²⁵ Compare Tertullian *AgP* 3.

¹²⁶ *OFP* I.2.11.

¹²⁷ Compare Origen's remarks on Heb 1:3 in *OFP* I.2.7.

this supports points Origen has made earlier in I.2.1-4 about the Son's eternity and derivation.

From there Origen proceeds to 'the unspotted mirror of the ...working of God'.¹²⁹ This re-inforces earlier discussion of Wisdom as the second statue, imaging the infinite statue.¹³⁰ Origen notes:

[Jesus says] 'the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he hath seen the Father doing'.

As regards the power of his works, then, the Son is in no way whatever separate or different from the Father, nor is his work anything other than the Father's work, but there is one and the same movement, so to speak, in all they do; consequently the Father has called him an 'unspotted mirror', in order to make it understood that there is absolutely no dissimilarity between the Son and the Father.¹³¹

Thus the 'mirror' language of Wisdom 7:26 is explained in terms of unity of operation, again using John 5:19. However, the Father's will has primacy, since the Son does not act independently. Origen emphasises that the Son does the same, not just similar, things.¹³²

The revelatory value of the Son's actions rests upon his relationship of dependence towards the Father. The actions would lack this mirroring quality if they were independent, rather than exercises of the Father's sovereignty and will through the Son. The stress laid once more on the one-ness of power and work between Father and Son is noteworthy.

¹²⁸ This is one of several places where it seems problematic to see Arius as faithfully reproducing Origen's overall thought.

¹²⁹ *OFP* I.2.12.

¹³⁰ *OFP* I.2.8.

¹³¹ *OFP* I.2.12.

¹³² *OFP* I.2.12.

Origen lastly develops ‘the image of his goodness.’¹³³ He uses this to discuss several themes. First, the Father’s primacy is again upheld, for he is ‘original goodness’. Secondly, this contributes to a ‘unified’ structure of goodness, for the Son has no independent goodness, any more than he has independent power, again supporting the derivation idea asserted in I.2.1-4. Thirdly, this does not mean that the Son has a lesser goodness, merely that it is not independently originated.

It is worth briefly reviewing this material on the Son in his divinity. The Son emerges as an intermediary in several respects.¹³⁴ He is an intermediary between God and creation, in that the Father is simple and the multiplicity of creation is introduced in the multiply-constituted Son. He is an intermediary, too, in that through him God is known. He is an intermediary in that God rules and exercises power through him.¹³⁵ In terms of the parameters Origen seeks to meet, this intermediary function requires distinction between Father and Son.

A related point is that the Son’s works not merely resemble the Father’s, but are the Father’s. Origen emphasises this, for all three principal texts refer to it,¹³⁶ and John 5:19 provides an important foundation for it. This is highly significant and parallels Tertullian’s reasoning: the position of the Father is not compromised because the rule of the cosmos is still one rule, done at his behest. Ditheism is thus deflected. Furthermore, the Son’s full participation in his Father’s power suggests the propriety of worshipping him.

¹³³ *OFP* I.2.13.

¹³⁴ So, e.g. R. Lyman 1993:39.

¹³⁵ This strongly resembles Wisdom as portrayed in Wis 7:25. See Grabbe 1997:78.

However, the Son's full participation in his Father's power is based on derivation. Just as the Son is what he is by receiving from the Father, his rule is likewise derived. The pattern of derivation means that in examining the Son one is inevitably led to look at his relationship with the Father.

Nevertheless, suspicion lingers that the revelation of the Father-Son relation does not enjoy the prominence with Origen that John in particular gives it in, say, John 8. Origen has largely explored matters through 'image' and 'mirror'. This though, raises the question of what the Son does in the Incarnation.

4.4.2. *The Son In His Humanity*

Origen resumes detailed christological discussion in *On First Principles* II.6.1ff. Harl rightly stresses the acute conceptual difficulties the Incarnation poses in a platonising environment.¹³⁷ Knowledge of transcendent reality was precisely not derived from sense perception. Yet the Incarnation apparently contradicted that. Entry into flesh could be thought shameful.¹³⁸ Nevertheless Origen insists on the reality of Christ's humanity:

...[W]e must pursue our contemplation with all fear and reverence, as we seek to prove how the reality of each nature exists in one and the same person...¹³⁹

He adds, understandably, that explaining the two natures in the one being is surpassingly difficult, but presses on anyway.¹⁴⁰ In the background is Origen's idea of the Son as cosmic Wisdom. As such, he permeates all rational creatures, each

¹³⁶ Col 1:15 in *OFP* I.2.6, Heb 1:3 in I.2.8, and Wis 7:25ff in I.2.12. The last passage is most explicit on unity of operation.

¹³⁷ Harl 1958: 16f.

¹³⁸ As *AgC* IV.2 testifies.

¹³⁹ *OFP* II.6.2.

¹⁴⁰ *OFP* II.6.3.

attaining a share.¹⁴¹ This Wisdom notion is then grafted onto a Christological account. The share each soul attains varies, according to its affection for Wisdom. There is, though, one particular soul, of which Origen writes:

that soul of which Jesus said, ‘No man taketh from me my soul’,¹⁴² clinging to God from the beginning of the creation and ever after in a union inseparable and indissoluble, as being the soul of the wisdom and word of God and of the truth and the true light, and receiving him wholly, and itself entering into his light and splendour, was made with him in a pre-eminent degree one spirit, just as the apostle promises to them whose duty is to imitate Jesus, that ‘he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit’.¹⁴³

This soul acts as an intermediary between the flesh and the nature of God (*en passant* a strong indication of the Son’s full divinity). It has affinity with God, for it is rational, but is also open to corporeality. Thus a human soul forms the intermediary between corporeal existence and incorporeal deity. Since this soul is wholly entered by, or has wholly entered, the Son, one can properly speak of the divine nature in human terms, and the human nature in divine terms.¹⁴⁴

Christ’s soul is distinguished by not partaking in the pre-mundane fall from affection, which Origen thought preceded bodily existence.¹⁴⁵ Rather it cleaved perfectly to the Son,¹⁴⁶ and became incapable of falling through prolonged custom. Christ had a human, rational soul without the possibility of sin.¹⁴⁷

This union between soul and *Logos* is explored in three ways. Origen quotes ‘he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit’ (1 Corinthians 6:17).¹⁴⁸ Further, a

¹⁴¹ Compare D. Winston 1979:38 on Wis 7:24 ‘...wisdom pervades the entire cosmos...’

¹⁴² Again Origen uses verbal co-incidence to establish a conceptual point. Compare his treatment of ἀρχή in Jn 1:1a.

¹⁴³ *OFP* II.6.3.

¹⁴⁴ For the association of Origen with a pre-existent soul of Christ see anathemata 1, 7 and 8 of Constantinople II 553 A.D.

¹⁴⁵ See Crouzel 1989:208-210 for discussion of the pre-mundane Fall.

¹⁴⁶ *OFP* II.6.4.

¹⁴⁷ *OFP* II.6.5.

¹⁴⁸ *OFP* II.6.3.

comparison is drawn with marriage, which makes one flesh,¹⁴⁹ although the relation between Word and soul is closer than husband and wife. Lastly, the relationship resembles iron put into the flame. Kept in the flame, one is led to say the iron ‘...has completely changed into fire’.¹⁵⁰

Several points require mention. First, two of these examples, one flesh in marriage and 1 Corinthians 6:17, occur in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*.¹⁵¹ There, though, they were used to describe how Father and Son might yet be one God. The common principle, of course, is that two things might yet be one.

Secondly, 1 Corinthians 6:17 is applied to the soul which united itself perfectly in the pre-mundane state to the Logos.¹⁵² Yet clearly the text also applies to other souls which subsequently become united to the Logos. Grillmeier’s reaction is apt: ‘...Christ is in danger of being still only a “quantitatively” different exceptional case of the universal relationship of the “perfect” to the Logos.’¹⁵³ Here the trajectory to seeing believers as ‘*isochristes*’ is intelligible.¹⁵⁴

Thirdly, the analogy of iron in fire, certainly in Origen’s pre-mundane account of the soul uniting with Christ, seems highly problematic. This risks appearing as an unstable christology, with, paradoxically, both ‘nestorianising’¹⁵⁵ and ‘eutychianising’¹⁵⁶ possibilities.¹⁵⁷ ‘Nestorianising’, because Christ’s human soul

¹⁴⁹ *OFP* II.6.3.

¹⁵⁰ *OFP* II.6.6.

¹⁵¹ *DH* 124-126

¹⁵² *OFP* II.6.3. See also *AgC* VI.47.

¹⁵³ Grillmeier 1975:169.

¹⁵⁴ Crouzel 1989:177 sees it as an Origenist heresy. Again note anathema 13 of Constantinople II.

¹⁵⁵ So J. Rowe 1987:122f.

¹⁵⁶ Clearly such labels have dangers, since neither Nestorianism nor Eutychianism were presented distinctly to Origen as christological options. Nevertheless comparisons may be drawn.

seems in principle originally distinct from his deity. This might seem to charge Origen with failing to provide an anhypostatic account of Jesus' humanity. Yet his approach does leave problems persisting in his account of the Incarnation. Thus Origen responds to the charge that if Jesus were divine he could not have been deserted as he was in Gethsemane:

To which we reply, that even we do not suppose the body of Jesus, which was then an object of sight and perception, to have been God. And why do I say His body? Nay, not even His soul, of which it is related, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." But as, according to the Jewish manner of speaking, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh," and, "Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me," God is believed to be He who employs the soul and body of the prophet as an instrument; and as, according to the Greeks, he who says, "I know both the number of the sand, and the measures of the sea, And I understand a dumb man, and hear him who does not speak," is considered to be a god when speaking, and making himself heard through the Pythian priestess; so, according to our view, it was the Logos God, and Son of the God of all things, who spake in Jesus these words, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life;" and these, "I am the door;" and these, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven;" and other expressions similar to these.¹⁵⁸

Such thinking utilises the hermeneutical principle that some things are attributable to the humanity and others to the divinity.¹⁵⁹ Equally clearly, this preserves the real humanity of Jesus' soul. On this account, it has not been completely divinised. Yet the comparison with the Delphic priestess is troubling, because she is ecstatically seized by the god, and is no co-agent. More telling still, perhaps, is the parallel with the biblical prophets. On Origen's account, they seem to be instruments in giving God's word, not full conscious participators. Hence Rowe trenchantly, but understandably, remarks that the divine nature controls the human like a 'marionette'.¹⁶⁰ Grillmeier, too, seems uncomfortably accurate in commenting that Origen risks imposing a

¹⁵⁷ It is no surprise that Origen may give rise to disparate theologies: Harl 1958:351 notes 'Il sent rarement le besoin de choisir'.

¹⁵⁸ *AgC* II.9.

¹⁵⁹ Compare *AgC* II.25. Pollard 1956/57:337 and Wiles 1960:113 note the exegetical principle.

¹⁶⁰ Rowe 1987:137f.

‘double personality’ upon Christ.¹⁶¹ This model therefore tends to attenuate the uniqueness of the Incarnation as a revelatory event.

However, Origen’s account has another strand. The ‘eutychianising’ tendency is present in *On First Principles* itself. The iron in the fire somehow becomes fire. It no longer admits cold and functions like fire rather than iron. Origen in fact applies the imagery to the mutability question. What was mutable has become immutable through its union with the Word of God,¹⁶² and hence impeccable. Here the divine seems fully communicated to human nature.¹⁶³ This is supported in *Against Celsus*:

[W]ith respect to His mortal body, and the human soul which it contained, we assert that not by their communion merely with Him, but by their unity and intermixture, they received the highest powers, and after participating in His divinity, were changed into God.¹⁶⁴

However, while humanity seems invested with divinity, the reverse is not apparently true. The Word did not acquire the capacity to suffer as the physical body or soul does.¹⁶⁵ An obvious question still arises: if the divine nature is communicated to the human soul, how can that soul experience what Origen regards as incompatible with divine nature (suffering etc.)? Passages such as *Against Celsus* II.16, where Origen insists the death is real, suggest he is no docetist,¹⁶⁶ but it is not clear how that can be easily reconciled with this strand within his christology.

This is an acute problem for two reasons. First, if the soul-*Logos* union resembles the Father-Son union (since both are examples of how two may yet be

¹⁶¹ Grillmeier 1975:169.

¹⁶² *OFP* II.6.6. Compare II.6.5 on acquired impeccability.

¹⁶³ Grillmeier 1975:159 speaks of the ontic unity of the soul and Christ. Compare too Wiles 1960:115.

¹⁶⁴ *AgC* III.41.

¹⁶⁵ *AgC* IV.15.

¹⁶⁶ Although Lampe 1997:80 argues that Origen has an insufficiently serious view of the Incarnation.

one),¹⁶⁷ and if the soul-*Logos* union is unstable (having either nestorianising or eutychianising tendencies), then similar considerations may also arise for the Father-Son union. There, the tendencies would be either towards ditheism ('nestorianising') or modalism ('eutychianising').

Secondly, the tendencies behind the iron in the fire analogy carry implications for revelation through the Incarnation. If the 'nestorianising' tendency predominates, the transparency of the Incarnation as a revelation of God may be imperilled. It may be unclear what is attributable to divinity and what to humanity. Further, if we already possess a hermeneutical key by which we know what is attributable to which nature, the Incarnation becomes unnecessary for revelation, contrary to John 1:18. Yet if the 'eutychianising' tendency predominates, so that the humanity is divinised, the question arises whether Christ can truly reveal a perfect human example of a life lived under God's will.¹⁶⁸ If, again, this exemplifies genuine tension,¹⁶⁹ or even contradiction,¹⁷⁰ in Origen's thought, so that he really does present both tendencies, this too constitutes a revelatory problem, for one is left asking which framework should apply to particular cases. If, finally, revelation has become problematic because this underlying christology is unstable, that has consequences for trinitarian theology because the link between economic and immanent trinities itself may be obscured.

¹⁶⁷ *DH* 124-126.

¹⁶⁸ Harl rightly points to Origen's concern with revelation of the godly life, e.g. Harl 1958:318.

¹⁶⁹ Crouzel 1989:49.

¹⁷⁰ Harl 1958:330.

4.5. Origen and the Relation between Father and Son

Some scholars have argued that Origen furnishes support both to ontological subordination and non-ontological subordination.¹⁷¹ At the risk of over-simplification, this section will deal with some considerations ranged on each side.

4.5.1. Considerations Supporting Ontological Subordination

Several factors strongly suggest ontological subordinationist tendencies, although Origen himself might well have resisted this.¹⁷² That said, four areas especially need consideration.

We turn first to the exegesis of John 1:1ff. Books I and II of the *Commentary on John* deal mostly with the Prologue, especially the first few verses. This gives considerable weight to the Prologue,¹⁷³ and to the Son in eternity in particular, although, of course, Origen deals with the fact of the Incarnation.

As already observed, Origen exegetes Wisdom as an ἀρχή in John 1:1a.¹⁷⁴ In reaching this conclusion Origen has rehearsed various possible meanings for ἀρχή and these bear on the relation of Father and Son.¹⁷⁵ He describes the Father as ἀρχή of the Son, but in two ways. First, the Father is the beginning of all things, for he is the beginning of the ‘demiurge’ (sic) who in turn is the beginning of what he makes.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ E.g. Fortman 1972:56.

¹⁷² The *Dialogue with Heraclides* shows a determination to defend the Son’s real deity. Compare too AgC VIII.12ff which vigorously upholds the legitimacy of worshipping the Son.

¹⁷³ The Prologue’s importance is commonly acknowledged. Thus Brown 1971 I:18 writes ‘[it] is the pearl within this Gospel.’

¹⁷⁴ CJ I.22.

¹⁷⁵ CJ I.16-22.

¹⁷⁶ CJ I.17.

‘Beginning’ denotes origin. Secondly, the Father is the ἀρχή of the Son in that he is the form or original¹⁷⁷ of which the Son is the image.¹⁷⁸ Both involve derivation.

This could initially suggest the ontological inferiority of the Son, but the material in *On First Principles* suggests caution. In terms of ἀρχή as origin,¹⁷⁹ this does not amount to saying that once the Son was not. Wisdom’s eternity is strongly attested,¹⁸⁰ which precludes extreme ontological subordinationism.¹⁸¹ As for ἀρχή as ‘form’, this is related to Colossians 1:15 and ideas of image.¹⁸² Yet, as discussed above, while the image language may be problematic at points, Origen develops ‘image’ precisely in terms such that the Son does not differ in substance from the Father.¹⁸³ Instead, ‘image’ suggests co-extensive powers between Father and Son - they do the same things.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, in the *Commentary on John* itself, Origen also draws out another meaning of ἀρχή, ‘that out of which a thing comes’, ‘the underlying matter from which things are formed’.¹⁸⁵ Significantly, Origen does not say the Father-Son relation exemplifies this. If it did, ontological subordination certainly could be hard to avoid. For, unless the Son had the whole of the substance in question, his inferiority would be implied.

¹⁷⁷ *CJ* I.19.

¹⁷⁸ Col 1:15 thus appears again.

¹⁷⁹ *CJ* I.17.

¹⁸⁰ *OFP* I.2.6ff, for example.

¹⁸¹ As Lyman 1993:51 observes.

¹⁸² *CJ* I.19.

¹⁸³ He is clear that ‘image’ in Col 1:15 is not like that of a portrait on wood, where the wood bearing the image is of a different substance from the original. *OFP* I.2.6.

¹⁸⁴ *OFP* I.2.6.

¹⁸⁵ *CJ* I.18.

Since Origen does not think the Father-Son relation exemplifies this kind of ἀρχή, it suggests Origen does not conceive of the Son as an emanation.¹⁸⁶ It may also indicate, though, that Athanasian-style consubstantiality is not to the fore in his consideration of the Father-Son relation. Possibly, a writer who did think predominantly on consubstantial lines would not so completely dismiss this particular version of ἀρχή although he would no doubt gloss it.

However, this consideration of the Father as ἀρχή of the Son indicates the significance of the Father's will. The discussion of ἀρχή as origin uses the pivotal text Proverbs 8:22, which deals in Origen's view with the Son's work as demiurge creating the cosmos.¹⁸⁷ Origen refers to the same text later, when discussing which meaning to adopt.¹⁸⁸ In doing so, he stresses the command of the Father in the demiurge's creative work.

The Father's will is also involved in the other meaning of ἀρχή, that of 'form', where the Son is the image. The Son's work is like the Father's, but done at the Father's bidding, so that the Son as image 'is like an act of [God's] will proceeding from the mind.'¹⁸⁹

The ἀρχή language does not, then, necessarily point to ontological subordination, but is in fact consistent with a 'functional' subordination rooted in eternity rather than restricted to the Incarnation.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ E.g. *OFP* I.2.6. confirms this.

¹⁸⁷ *CJ* I.17.

¹⁸⁸ *CJ* I.22.

¹⁸⁹ *OFP* I.2.6.

Origen continues his exegesis of John 1:1ff in Book II of the *Commentary on John*. He comments on the phrase καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν and notes first that the Word did not ‘come’ to God, as it did, say, to the prophets and also that ‘to be’ is used rather than ‘to become.’¹⁹¹ From this he concludes one cannot say either that the Word was originally apart from the Father and came into relationship with him, or that once the Word was not but originated in time (‘became’ as ‘came into being’). Thus he argues for the Word’s divinity: ‘With God, however, He is God, just because He is with Him.’¹⁹²

In fact he sees John 1:1 as a progression, culminating in 1:1c which asserts the Word’s divinity as the natural consequence of what precedes.¹⁹³ The assertion seems two-fold: the Word is eternal, but has also always been in this particular relationship with God.¹⁹⁴ As regards eternity, Origen shows elsewhere the importance he attaches to worshipping the right object,¹⁹⁵ and especially refers to the impropriety of worshipping something created. But clearly if the Word is eternal, it is not created. The Word’s eternity is then readily linked to his deity.¹⁹⁶

However, the second aspect, relationship, also matters. Origen comments that John 1:1 ends stating, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος ‘so that it might be seen that the Word being with God makes Him God.’¹⁹⁷ This means the Son’s divinity must be discussed

¹⁹⁰ A broad agreement with McDonnell’s general conclusions 1994:19, 29.

¹⁹¹ γίνομαι is first used of the Word at 1:14.

¹⁹² *CJ* II.1. Compare Ridderbos 1997:25 fn. 23 who speaks of the disposition and orientation implied by the phrase. Brown 1971 I: 5 sees a ‘nuance of relationship’ in Jn 1:1b.

¹⁹³ *CJ* II.1.

¹⁹⁴ Modern commentators divide over the extent to which John depicts trinitarian relations and what kind they might be. Brown 1971 I:5, 23 argues for caution over the specific content of the relationship.

¹⁹⁵ Note *AgC* I.23, III.15.

¹⁹⁶ Among modern commentators, compare e.g. Ridderbos 1997:25.

¹⁹⁷ *CJ* II.1.

in terms of his relation to the Father. Origen turns to this in chapter 2 of the *Commentary on John* Book II.

In that section Origen refers to the fear some have of proclaiming two gods, which leads them either to deny the Son is distinct or to give him a separate existence ‘making his sphere of essence fall outside that of the Father.’¹⁹⁸ In answer, he observes that John calls the Word ‘God’ only without the article.¹⁹⁹ For only the First Person is αὐτόθεος, that is, God of himself. Origen develops this with reference to John 17:3 where Jesus talks of eternal life consisting in knowing him, the Son, and also ‘the only true God’ (τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεόν). The consequence is:

that all beyond the Very God is made God by participation in His divinity, and is not to be called simply God (with the article), but rather God (without article).²⁰⁰

This underlines that the Son’s divinity is being-God-in-a-relation, more accurately still, being God because of a relation, namely participation. Conversely, the Father needs no such relation to be divine. Hence αὐτόθεος emphasises not merely supremacy of will in relationship, but that the First Person is simply self-referring in his divinity.²⁰¹ This would support Grillmeier’s charge that the Son risks being only quantitatively different from other beings.²⁰² the Son, like other beings the Scriptures call ‘god’, is so only by participation.

In assessing Grillmeier’s comment, it is worth recalling more of the argument from *Commentary on John* II.2. Origen does assert that:

¹⁹⁸ The same errors referred to in *DH* 128.

¹⁹⁹ Modern commentators draw less subtle conclusions. Brown 1971 I:5 recalls the argument that θεός is anarthrous to show it is predicate rather than subject, while indicating that this is not decisive. Barrett 1962:130 sees θεός as anarthrous because the Word is not the only being of whom this might be said.

²⁰⁰ *CJ* II.2.

²⁰¹ Compare Berchman 1984:124, 151 and 154 and Studer 1993:84f.

²⁰² Grillmeier 1975:169.

the first-born of all creation...is a being of more exalted rank than the other gods beside Him, of whom God is the God, ... It was by the offices of the first-born that they became gods.

The Son is therefore distinguished from 'the other gods'. Yet the qualitative nature of that difference remains problematic. Origen continues:

The true God, then, is "The God," and those who are formed after Him are gods, images, as it were, of Him the prototype. But the archetypal image, again, of all these images is the Word of God...

Here Origen draws what seems like a platonic distinction between prototype and image. The prototype (the 'true' God language draws on John 17:3) is the First Person, and the Second Person, while pre-eminent as an archetype, is nevertheless an 'image', and belongs with the other 'gods' who are also images. The stronger the prototype/image distinction becomes, the more the Son appears as ontologically inferior. Like the other 'gods' the Son is God 'not possessing that of himself, but by his being with the Father.'²⁰³ Inevitably the Word seems not to be ἀληθινός when considered as θεός. This is highly problematic if John 17:3 is taken as referring to traditional attributes of God,²⁰⁴ from which the Son is excluded.

Yet Origen recognises elsewhere that denying, for example, eternity to the Son involves disparaging the Father. It implies that he once lacked something, namely fatherhood, something he is by virtue of his relation with another.²⁰⁵ However, this lies uneasily with αὐτόθεος.

Two solutions are perhaps possible. One is to see Origen as having two inconsistent accounts of the First Person, one of which leads to the Son's ontological subordination. The non-subordinationist strand, however, suggests Origen would not

²⁰³ *CJ* II.2.

have been content with that development of his thought. The other solution is to see Origen as having some sense of hierarchy within the First Person, so that fatherhood is not a feature constituting his divinity. Rather, his uncreated, ‘stand-alone’ quality does that. This, though, seems unattractive because it rests uneasily both with the First Person’s simplicity,²⁰⁶ and also with the importance attached to knowing God as Father.²⁰⁷ Again this amounts ultimately to inconsistency in his depiction of the First Person, but at another point.

Turning to other considerations bearing on ontological subordination, an obvious hunting-ground is John 14:28, which Origen utilises heavily in refuting Celsus.²⁰⁸ This is significant, because Origen defends the worship of Jesus while maintaining the Father’s role and supremacy.²⁰⁹ Origen does this by appealing to a unity of will, in which the Son again features as image of the Father. We have already seen how image terminology incorporates the supremacy of the Father’s will.²¹⁰ This suggests Origen takes John 14:28 as showing, not ontological subordination, but rather obedience.²¹¹

In his extended thoughts on prayer Origen suggests that perhaps ‘we ought not to pray to anyone born [of woman], nor even to Christ himself, but only to the God and Father of all...’.²¹² This is not, though, based on ontological subordination. He

²⁰⁴ So R. Bultmann 1971:494 n. 7 and Brown 1971 II:741.

²⁰⁵ E.g. *OFP* I.2.2.

²⁰⁶ It implies essential as against non-essential attributes.

²⁰⁷ Widdicombe 1994:2.

²⁰⁸ *AgC*.VIII.14,15.

²⁰⁹ *AgC* VIII. 12.

²¹⁰ *OFP* I.2. 6.

²¹¹ Compare Pollard 1956-7:337-338 on Origen’s view of John 4:34 and 10:30.

²¹² *On Prayer* (hereafter *OPr*) 15.1.

stresses that Jesus is a high-priest appointed by the Father.²¹³ This priestly function explains why prayer is made through him to the Father, and is allotted at the Father's will. Neither function nor allocation point necessarily to ontological subordination, but only to obedience to the Father. This economically explains Origen's insistence on the propriety of worshipping the Son (because he is divine),²¹⁴ while still pressing for prayer to be made to the Father through the Son.

Finally, the Father's simplicity as against the Son's multiplicity must again be considered. Within a platonising hierarchy of being, it is hard not to see simplicity as ontologically superior to multiplicity. Simplicity also does not depend on relation with another. Hence similar considerations arise as with Origen's conception of the Father as αὐτόθεος: he is God in isolation rather than relation, and the Son's lack of this attribute could suggest genuine ontological inferiority.

4.5.2 *Considerations Supporting Non-Ontological Subordination*

In *Against Celsus* Origen must meet the charge that Christians have contravened monotheism.²¹⁵ To do so, he invokes John 10:30, as in the *Dialogue with Heraclides*.²¹⁶ The citation serves the same purpose in both places, to show the oneness of God. Origen explains oneness from the one heart and mind of the early Christians (Acts 4:32),²¹⁷ thus emphasising the unity of will. Origen summarises:

ὄντα δύο τῇ ὑποστάσει πράγματα, ἐν δε τῇ ὁμονοίᾳ καὶ τῇ συμφωνίᾳ
καὶ τῇ ταυτότητι τοῦ βουλήματος.

²¹³ *OPr* 15.1-4.

²¹⁴ E.g. *AgC* VIII. 12.

²¹⁵ *AgC* VIII.12.

²¹⁶ As he does in *DH* 128.

²¹⁷ In *AgC* VIII.12.

The parallel material in the *Dialogue with Heraclides* proceeds a little differently. Origen compares two other unions with the God-Christ union.²¹⁸ The first is husband with wife and the second the righteous person with Christ. Each union can be characterised differently.²¹⁹ The marriage union is ‘flesh’ (Genesis 2:24), the righteous person with Christ ‘spirit’ (1 Corinthians 6:17), while the third union, Christ with God, can only be characterised as God.

Two points should be made. First, in the comparisons, the union apparently rests on a unity of will: the wills to marry; the wills of Christ and the righteous. ‘Will’ is then naturally inferred in the third case too. Pollard sums it up as ‘a moral unity of wills.’²²⁰ Secondly, Pollard, following Chadwick,²²¹ argues that this structure shows Origen envisaged two wills becoming one, and thus two Gods who become one.²²² The Son’s independence is prior, logically if not chronologically, to oneness. This is so, after all, with both marriage and the union of the righteous with Christ.

It is important to note how Origen has structured this union of wills. It is not simply that Son and Father agree or mutually consent. Instead, the discussions about the Son as image and Wisdom demonstrate a definite order, for the Son emerges as expressing and performing the Father’s will.²²³ Almost ironically, Origen sees this primacy of the Father’s will as the final reason for worshipping the Son as God: Celsus contends *Christians* exalt the man Jesus greatly by worshipping him. Origen

²¹⁸ *DH* 126.

²¹⁹ *DH* 128.

²²⁰ Pollard 1956-7:338.

²²¹ 1954:433.

²²² Pollard 1956-57:339.

²²³ *OFP* I.2.6-13. See above, especially in relation to Origen’s use of John 5:19.

replies that the *Father* exalted Jesus to this.²²⁴ Hence, McDonnell seems justified in talking of Origen holding a ‘non-ontological subordination’ at least in this respect.²²⁵

It should be added that this ‘non-ontological subordination’ is eternal. The procession in terms of will is eternal,²²⁶ and the governing will is the Father’s.²²⁷ Conformity to the Father’s will is not, then, confined for Origen to the economy. This is, naturally, readily intelligible given the stress on the Father’s unchanging nature: a change in his relationship with the Word at the Incarnation sits uncomfortably with immutability.

As regards other material, a fragment of Origen’s *Commentary on Hebrews* uses the term *homoousios*, dealing with Wisdom 7:25. Fortman considers whether this means *homoousios* generically or whether it means that Father and Son are ‘of identically the same substance’. Fortman prefers the former,²²⁸ but does so because of Origen’s perceived subordinationism, which is exactly the point under investigation. Kelly suspects this passage for two reasons. It survives only in Rufinus’ translation and thus could be an attempt to improve Origen’s reputation. Further, in the surviving Greek material, the union is not consubstantial but one of will, love and action.²²⁹

The Rufinus point is not easily resolved: the evidence to decide the specific point is unavailable, and while it is prudent to be wary of accepting Rufinus, this should not methodologically become a procrustean bed excluding any orthodox

²²⁴ *AgC* VIII.14, perhaps from John 5:23.

²²⁵ McDonnell 1994:29.

²²⁶ *OFP* I.2.6.

²²⁷ McDonnell 1994:13 fn. 53 describes this as a ‘psychological analysis of the trinity’.

²²⁸ Fortman 1972:56.

²²⁹ Kelly 1977:130.

reading of Origen. One might as well reject any negative evidence from Jerome and Justinian because they think Origen unorthodox. Kelly's observation about Rufinus is not, then, decisive.

As for the other point, it is worth bearing in mind another major exegesis by Origen of Wisdom 7:25f, in *On First Principles*.²³⁰ Certainly, a union of will is in evidence,²³¹ and Wisdom is seen as the executor of the Father's will. It is also true that Wisdom is seen as eternally with the Father: he is never without his Wisdom.²³² But Wisdom's omnipotence is the same omnipotence the Father has.²³³ We have already explored how this functions to ensure Wisdom is no second god in the sense of an eternal entity independently ruling a rival kingdom. It should be noted that this shared omnipotence is predicated on the Father's donation of all things to the Son.²³⁴ Clearly Origen envisages that this sharing is extensive. It is perhaps worth enquiring whether this also leaves open a shared substance. Possibly, *homoousios* in its consubstantial sense is not wholly alien to this approach to Wisdom 7:25f. In that case the fragment from *Commentary on Hebrews* develops a trajectory found in *On First Principles*.²³⁵ This might caution against accepting too readily a subordinationist view of Origen, but it would, of course, be too slender and speculative to support full-orbed consubstantiality. This is particularly so given the exegesis of John 1:1 when the Father is not seen as ἀρχή of the Son as the underlying material from which the Son is formed.²³⁶

²³⁰ Notably *OFP* I.2.9-10.

²³¹ *OFP* I.2.9.

²³² *OFP* I.2.9 and 10. This is a consistent thought in this part of *OFP*.

²³³ *OFP* I.2.10.

²³⁴ Drawn from Jn 17:10.

²³⁵ Stead 1977:211f accepts more strongly that the term shows the Son proceeding from the Father 'while preserving a community or unity of substance' (212). However, he acknowledges the fluidity of the terms makes certainty difficult.

²³⁶ *CJ* I.18.

Two other considerations require mention which fit badly with ontological subordination. Origen endorses (and encourages) worship of the Son,²³⁷ whereas he does not accept the worship of angels.²³⁸ This clearly suggests he saw the Son as fully divine. One does not worship a creature.²³⁹

Lastly, there are the implications of the mutual knowledge of Father and Son.²⁴⁰ Given the Father's incorporeal infinity, he is, to us, incomprehensible.²⁴¹ Yet Origen is clear that he is not incomprehensible to the Son. This at once marks a difference between the Son and us. Moreover, given Origen's commitment to full sharing between Father and Son,²⁴² it is readily understood that the Father may fully communicate himself. Such full communication and knowledge may well point towards ontological equality, not subordination.

4.6. Conclusions

Origen strives to meet three parameters in discussing trinitarian relations: the distinction of the Persons; the divinity of each; and the propriety in monotheistic terms of worshipping the Son and Spirit as well as the Father. His reaction in *Against Celsus* shows how important he thought the last of these. Problems, though, relate principally to the first parameter, his account of Personal distinction. In fact his account has three strains, one starting from the Father, the other from the Son, and the third from his analogies of how two may be one.

²³⁷ *AgC* VIII.12ff.

²³⁸ *AgC* V.5.

²³⁹ *AgC* III.15.

²⁴⁰ Referred to in *OFP* I.1.8.

²⁴¹ *OFP* I.1.5.

²⁴² *OFP* I.2.10.

In discussing the distinction of the Father, Origen proposes that the First Person alone is αὐτόθεος, related notably to his simplicity. As such, he is divine without reference to the other Persons, a stand-alone God.²⁴³ Such distinction is not based on correlative relations. Three consequences readily follow: first, relationality appears non-essential to the First Person, thereby almost rendering the Fatherhood epiphenomenal.²⁴⁴ Secondly, this view of the First Person necessarily renders the divinity of the other two Persons suspect: the Son clearly is neither simple nor αὐτόθεος. This imperils the other parameters of Origen's trinitarian thought, and ontological subordination lurks at hand. Thirdly, the revelation of a simple Father by a multiple Son seems attenuated.

However, when discussing the distinction from the point of view of the Son, different considerations arise. Here, above all, the Son, as Wisdom of God, is his image. The relation of image and original is central here to who the Son is and introduces a pattern of derivation in which the Son is eternal and implements the Father's will. Although not using Tertullian's terms, this is a similar monarchical conception, with one consolidated rule, in which the Son shares and executes the Father's power fully but at his appointment. Their operation is one, based on the Father's sharing all he is and has with the Son. This account of distinction is based on correlative relations, and relations, moreover, where the Son appears necessary in some way for the Father to be who he is: for God can never be without his Wisdom.

²⁴³ See Berchman 1984:124, 151 and 153.

²⁴⁴ Although Origen himself might well have been strongly disinclined to draw this inference.

Origen's analogies of how two may be one turn on a union of wills. The Father-Son union appears similar to those of marriage, of the soul in Christ, and of the believer with Christ. The christological union thus conceived is unstable, with tendencies either towards the confusion of the natures or towards their fundamental independence. Similar doubts could also arise over the stability of the union of wills between the Persons. Unclarities in Origen's doctrine of revelation exacerbate this problem.

The difficulty, therefore, in evaluating Origen's theology of trinitarian relations is that there are several accounts of personal distinction. Nor are they easily reconciled, for one turns on independence, the other on correlative relations, and the third on an unstable union. None, perhaps, is entirely free from difficulty, but the account turning on independence intriguingly arises less from Origen's concern to defend the Son and his independence, but more from Origen's concern for the Father and his.

CHAPTER 5 ATHANASIUS: THE SOLUTION OF DIVINE SONSHIP

It is proposed that:

5(a). Athanasius defends a monotheism, which:

- (i) stresses the distinction between the uncreated creator (who is simple and unchangeable) and created; and*
- (ii) endorses God's cosmic monarchy.*

5(b). To support this, he uses Sonship, because it provides:

- (i) Personal distinction (preserving the data of the Incarnation while avoiding Sabellianism);*
- (ii) essential similarity (necessary for the Son to reveal the Father properly and perform the works he does);*
- (iii) ethical relations which preserve the monarchy, for a true son is under his father's authority, not his rival; and*
- (iv) an explanation of how something can be distinct from the First Person without being a creature.*

5(c). Derivation is important in this account since Athanasius traces the Son's sovereignty back to the Father's gift, and the Son's nature is derived in that he is 'of' the Father and from no other nature: the Son is not an externality, which would imply polytheism.

5(d). Father and Son manifest inseparability as well as distinction of Persons and a joint operation in which the Father's will has primacy.

5(e). Athanasius is methodologically consistent in using Scripture and the data of the Incarnation to discuss the eternal relations.

5(f). Athanasius' proposal is a justifiable synthesis of material in John's Gospel dealing with Sonship.

5(g). The Son's identity as fully divine is necessary for Athanasius, if there is to be true knowledge of God and salvation.

5.1. Introduction

Athanasius declares:

For there is but one form of Godhead, which is also in the Word; and one God, the Father, existing by Himself according as He is above all, and appearing in the Son according as He pervades all things, and in the Spirit according as in Him He acts in all things through the Word. For thus we confess God to be one through the Triad, and we say that it is much more religious than the godhead of the heretics with its many kinds, and many parts, to entertain a belief of the One Godhead in a Triad.¹

Athanasius here portrays himself and his version of trinitarian theology as fully supporting biblical monotheism, with the corollary that his opponents do not.² That is indeed G. Prestige's view - under Athanasius 'Christian monotheism was saved from extinction'.³ Those who charge trinitarian theology, so influenced by Athanasius, with inherent polytheism, might find this ironic.⁴ It is intriguing to see Athanasius as defending monotheism, although the irony is perhaps less surprising given the immensely varied reactions he continues to provoke as a person. Sometimes seen as the victim *par excellence* of oppressive state action, to others he is himself the oppressor victimising his opponents.⁵

¹ *Contra Arianos* (hereafter *CAr*) III.15. Translations are from NPNF 2nd series vol. 4 unless otherwise stated. Kannengiesser 1993 suggests *CAr* III is pseudo-Athanasian, but the thoughts here can be paralleled from elsewhere, e.g. *De Synodis* 50-52, and Kannengiesser's suggestion has not yet been widely accepted.

² Primarily, of course, here the Arians, but also Marcionites and others: see earlier in the section.

³ Prestige 1980:76.

⁴ Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians, for example.

⁵ K. Anatolios 1996:265 notes of recent historiography that current *chic* sees Athanasius as violent and heavy-handed, although suppressing evidence of this. See T.D. Barnes 1993:2 'This study starts from the *presumption* [emphasis added] that Athanasius consistently misrepresented central facts about his ecclesiastical career.' and Hanson 1983:43f to the effect that Athanasius was unscrupulous, violent and justly disliked.

However, it is unnecessary to adjudicate here on Athanasius' moral probity.⁶ What falls for consideration is whether his trinitarian theology successfully preserves biblical monotheism.⁷ This will be done first by examining some central features of Athanasius' theology and method, briefly reviewing his doctrine of God, and finally describing and analysing his ideas regarding divine sonship in terms of scriptural derivation, contours, and scriptural faithfulness.

5.2. Some Central Features of Athanasius' Theology and Method

5.2.1. *The Significance of Athanasius' non-Arian writings*

The Arian controversy, in its various forms,⁸ occasions an enormous proportion of Athanasius' writings.⁹ This can cause some difficulty in establishing his theology more globally outside that question. It is therefore alluring to examine those extended writings not explicitly tied to the Arian controversy but presenting a sustained theological picture, namely *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione*.¹⁰

The introduction to *Contra Gentes* is generalising:¹¹ although addressed ostensibly to an individual, Macarius, the discussion relates to the overall content of Christian belief. Athanasius claims to be writing about what he himself was taught '... the faith, namely, of Christ the Saviour',¹² to confirm Macarius in that belief.¹³ The

⁶ Indeed the methodology of T.D. Barnes 1993 makes it singularly difficult to do so, since protestations of innocence in Athanasius' works tend for methodological reasons to be re-construed as suppression of guilt, and, therefore, tacit admissions.

⁷ Thus *Car* III.8 envisages the vindication of monotheism as a blessing for humanity. The rationale for this is connected to Athanasius' conception of the relation between the knowledge of God and salvation (see below).

⁸ The point is well-made that Arius and, for example, Eunomius were not entirely of one mind.

⁹ As G. Florovsky 1964:53 notes.

¹⁰ The case has been canvassed for a date in the 330s for *Contra Gentes -De Incarnatione* (hereafter *CG-DI*) see e.g. M. Slusser 1986:114-17. Contrast E.Meijering 1974a:109 who prefers an earlier date between 318-323. The text and translation of *CG-DI* used here is R. Thompson 1971.

¹¹ *CG* 1.

¹² *CG* 1.

¹³ *CG* 1.

introduction to *De Incarnatione* indicates it continues this project.¹⁴ Therefore *Contra Gentes* and *De Incarnatione* may help delineate the broader theological context of Athanasius' anti-Arian polemic, especially since theological coherence exists between these general works and the explicitly anti-Arian writings.¹⁵ The precise date of composition does not significantly alter the value of these works for this purpose.

5.2.2. *Broad Theological Features*

Contra Gentes and *De Incarnatione* aim to remind Macarius why the cross is no discreditable defeat for Christ but in reality a victory achieving salvation for human beings.¹⁶ This draws Athanasius into discussing three related topics: creation, salvation and the knowledge of God, all developed in both works.

Creation is central to both treatises. Athanasius is, of course, committed to *creatio ex nihilo*.¹⁷ This sharply distinguishes creator from created, a fundamental consideration in these two treatises and the Arian writings, to the point that J. Roldanus comments that this idea '...governs all his thinking.'¹⁸ The Creator is uncreated,¹⁹ and 'incorporeal and incorruptible and immortal, lacking nothing whatever'.²⁰ By contrast, created things are changeable,²¹ not self-sufficient,²² and evil is not inherent to the cosmos, either as existing independently of God or as being

¹⁴ *DI* 1.

¹⁵ Slusser 1986:116. Florovsky 1964:53 notes that in general 'there was a perfect consistency and coherence in his theological views.'

¹⁶ *CG* 1.

¹⁷ *DI* 3 ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων καὶ μηδαμῇ μηδαμῶς ὑπάρχοντα τὰ ὅλα εἰς τὸ εἶναι πεποιηκέναι τὸν Θεὸν διὰ τοῦ Λόγου...

¹⁸ Roldanus 1968:349 '...domine toute sa réflexion.' P. Christou 1973:399 too draws attention to the fundamental role the distinction plays. See also J. Holland 1971:72. M. Haykin 1982:520-24 notes the importance of the 'created' question in Athanasius' discussion of the divinity of the Spirit in the Serapion correspondence.

¹⁹ *CG* 35. The term is ἀγέννητος.

²⁰ *CG* 22 ὁ μὲν γὰρ Θεὸς ἀσώματος ἐστὶ καὶ ἄφθαρτος καὶ ἀθάνατος, οὐδενὸς εἰς ὅτιον δεόμενος.

²¹ E.g. *CG* 22.

created as evil by God.²³ It is a corruption initiated by humans.²⁴ Florovsky captures Athanasius' distinction between creator and creature well:

There was, in the vision of St. Athanasius, an ultimate and radical cleavage or *hiatus* between the absolute Being of God and the contingent existence of the World. There were actually two modes of existence, radically different and totally dissimilar.²⁵

Creation thus establishes a relationship with very significant features. The Creator is benevolent towards his creation: his creative act came not from need, for he lacks nothing, but out of goodness, for he envies no-one existence.²⁶ As creator he rules his creation.²⁷ Since he creates all,²⁸ this rule is all-encompassing.²⁹ Crucially, therefore, there is one Lord of heaven and earth.³⁰ Concerning the cosmos, there is monarchy.

Athanasius' doctrine of creation thus has an optimistic aspect: since evil is not inherent to his creation but, being created, is subject to him, there is every reason to think the ruling Creator can overcome evil.

For the creature, there is profound dependence. The cosmos, being contingent, depends on God's will.³¹ This is momentous in Athanasian thinking: contingency and dependence on will denote creatureliness, and exclude uncreatedness. This dependence is especially marked for human creatures, and Athanasius views sin in

²² CG 27.

²³ CG 2 and 6.

²⁴ CG 2.

²⁵ Florovsky 1964:45.

²⁶ DI 3. A. Petterson 1998:59 notes echoes of Plato's *Timaeus*. Compare Anatolios 1998:41.

²⁷ See the association between creation and rule in e.g. CG 27 and 41. Discussed below.

²⁸ CG 39.

²⁹ CG 6.

³⁰ CG 6.

³¹ Cf. Florovsky 1964:37.

the context of this creational, dependent, relationship. Sin certainly is disobedience,³² but is also an ‘unmaking’ of creation.³³ Hence, salvation must be a re-making of creation.

Moving to the topic of salvation, sin leaves humanity liable to death.³⁴ It is, though, important to stress this results from how God has actually created: in creating he stipulated a law, so death prevails by a law of creation. Creation, then, determines the need for redemption in that it would be improper for God’s creative action to come to nothing.³⁵ Yet it also determines the contours of redemption: God cannot simply annul the word of creation which stipulates death for disobedience. If he did so, he would have lied: ‘For God would not have been truthful, if after he had said we would die, man had not died.’³⁶ Nor does simple human repentance suffice, for similar reasons.³⁷ The enormous importance Athanasius attaches to God’s truthfulness should be noted (a strong point of contact with Tertullian). For truthfulness determines the course salvation must follow, and truthfulness here is intimately related to the unchangingness of God’s word.

God thus must ensure both that creation is fulfilled (which means death must be conquered for humanity) and that the debt of death incurred by disobedience must be discharged. Only the creator can re-create, and, reasons Athanasius, since humans owe the debt, the creator can only discharge the debt as a human. Hence, says

³² *DI* 3 talks of God giving a νόμος which people might παραβαίνειν.

³³ *DI* 4-7.

³⁴ *DI* 6.

³⁵ *DI* 6.

³⁶ *DI* 6. The term for ‘truthful’ is ἀληθής. Compare *DI* 7 where Athanasius states God must not appear a ψεύστης.

³⁷ *DI* 7.

Athanasius, the incarnation of the Creator Son.³⁸ The Creator Son pays the debt of death in place of others:

For since the Word is above all, consequently by offering his temple and the instrument of his body as a substitute for all men, he fulfilled the debt by his death.³⁹

However, the Incarnation is not solely to pay the debt of death. It also renews the knowledge of the Creator in a created humanity rendered ignorant of its creator by idolatry.⁴⁰

Athanasius' division between creator and created provides a very distinctive understanding of idolatry. Idolatry inverts reality so that men '...[consider] non-existent things as real',⁴¹ and severs us from our source of life and blessing.⁴² Knowledge of God is not merely academic. Bereft of the knowledge of God, human beings resemble irrational beasts.⁴³ To know God truly is to be a truly human creature.

Athanasius envisages God as providing four ways for humanity to know him.⁴⁴ The divine image in humans, in which they are made;⁴⁵ the works of creation in its harmony; the law and the prophets;⁴⁶ and lastly the incarnate Son.⁴⁷ Idolatry

³⁸ *DI* 8.

³⁹ *DI* 9. ὑπὲρ πάντας γὰρ ὧν ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰκότως τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ναὸν καὶ τὸ σωματικὸν ὄργανον προσάγων ἀντίψυχον ὑπὲρ πάντων ἐπλήρου τὸ ὀφειλόμενον ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ.

⁴⁰ *DI* 11ff.

⁴¹ *CG* 2 τὰ οὐκ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα λογιζόμενοι.

⁴² *CG* 2. Cf Anatolios 1996:276f; Meijering 1974a:49 and R. Voyles 1989:138.

⁴³ *DI* 11.

⁴⁴ Pettersen 1995:39. Voyles 1989:136.

⁴⁵ *DI* 11 There is some ambiguity as to whether humans are in the likeness strictly of the Son or of the Father. *DI* 12 opens with the comment that being in the image means we can know God the Word and through him the Father.

⁴⁶ *DI* 12.

⁴⁷ *DI* 13ff.

confines human sight to creation, corrupting these first three means of revelation,⁴⁸ and necessitating revelation by the Incarnation. Idolatry wedds us to worshipping created things,⁴⁹ but these cannot give life and blessing, for created things are dependent, not self-sufficient. Idolatry thus condemns us to corruption.

Therefore, for humans to fulfil their original created purpose, knowledge of God must be renewed. To this end, the Son takes flesh and ‘enters’ creation, the arena to which idolatry has confined human sight. Revelation in the Incarnation is an act of mercy.⁵⁰ Athanasius’ thinking requires divinity be fully revealed through the Son. This further requires the Son’s full divinity. Lyman comments that Athanasius saw this full divinity ‘... as essential to the security of the divine revelation.’⁵¹ Without Christ’s divinity, ignorance of God must persist and humanity must be deprived of blessing. Hence the importance of refuting the Arians and retaining the *homoousion*.⁵²

These three concepts of creation, salvation and the knowledge of God are therefore closely inter-connected. Creation determines the need for, and form of, salvation history, notably in the sacrificial and revelatory aspects of the Incarnation. Salvation from corruption involves re-creation. Humans are created to know God, and so their salvation is impossible without a renewed knowledge of God. Athanasius requires therefore a fully divine incarnate saviour. Yet this saviour cannot breach the single rule of the cosmos flowing from Athanasius’ doctrine of creation.⁵³ These three concepts therefore present parameters for trinitarian theology.

⁴⁸ *DI* 12-14.

⁴⁹ *CG* 8.

⁵⁰ *DI* 15.

⁵¹ Lyman 1993:129.

⁵² See Walker 1974:270; Heron 1981:69; Torrance 1981:xi.

⁵³ *CG* 6 and 39-40.

Further, strong theological continuity exists between creation and salvation. Just as God created from goodness,⁵⁴ so too this goodness underpins God's redemptive activity.⁵⁵

5.2.3. *Method in Athanasius: The Place of Scripture*

Given Athanasius' stress on God's truthfulness, he views Scripture, as God's words, as the criterion for resolving theological disputes.⁵⁶ However, some aspects of his method require consideration. There must be purity of heart in reading the Scriptures.⁵⁷ There must, too, be due attention to the 'Scope' of Scripture.⁵⁸

'Scope' deals with God's economy in creation and redemption,⁵⁹ and is thus connected with the Word's Incarnation.⁶⁰ 'Scope' involves us in understanding the Word's double mode of existence.⁶¹ Hence, for example, the terms of Acts 2:36 ('...God has made him both Lord and Christ...') do not support Arianism, because his humanity, not his pre-incarnate nature, is in view.⁶² References to Christ's humanity (for example his suffering) therefore do not detract necessarily from his divinity, for such human references must be taken within the overall 'Scope'.

⁵⁴ *DI* 3. See too Petterson 1998:62.

⁵⁵ *CG* 41. Note also *In Illud Omnia* 2. Cf Anatolios 1996:275 - God's perfection is expressed 'in beneficence'.

⁵⁶ For further consideration of Athanasius' basic view of Scripture, see Appendix 3.

⁵⁷ *DI* 57. Widdicombe 1994:155-58. J. Brogan 1998:19.

⁵⁸ Many scholars rightly stress this e.g. Brogan 1998:19, J. Ernest 1993:342, Lyman 1993:130, and H. Sieben 1974:206.

⁵⁹ Lyman 1993:130 rightly draws attention to *C.Ar* I.55 in this respect.

⁶⁰ Ernest 1993:347.

⁶¹ Sieben 1974:211. Obviously Athanasius was not alone in this strategy. Augustine has something similar in his *forma servi/forma dei* rules, see chapter 7.5 below.

⁶² *C.Ar* II.16.

In this way ‘Scope’ provides an overall context for reading Scripture. The Athanasian emphases on time referred to, person referred to and purpose,⁶³ could initially resemble modern strictures emphasising a passage’s literary and historical context. It might, perhaps, produce some similar results and approaches,⁶⁴ but for Athanasius, context is wider and subtly different: it is ultimately theological or christological,⁶⁵ and involves the entire canon. Athanasius’ ready movement from a passage’s immediate context, not merely to that of the book, but to that provided by the canon demonstrates this. Thus, the time with which a comment deals must be seen with regard to the Incarnation; the person referred to must be understood in the light of the eternal Son’s Incarnation in a temporal, mutable world; and the purpose of a text must be read in the light of the purpose of our salvation.⁶⁶ The triad of time, person and purpose are not simply ways of finding the ‘literal sense’.⁶⁷

This emphasis on ‘Scope’ supports Athanasius’ view of scriptural unity,⁶⁸ which is itself clearly christological. Athanasius’ other theological values tend to demand this unity of scripture. God’s truthfulness requires that his word be fulfilled and not changed,⁶⁹ and also that the Scriptures cannot be inconsistent.⁷⁰ Moreover, God’s sovereignty over his creation also suggests the need for only one economy of salvation.

A modern exegete might fear that the canonical context of Athanasius’ ‘Scope’ might distort proper interpretation. Thus Athanasius addresses Christ’s

⁶³ *CAr* I.54.

⁶⁴ Note the way *CAr* I.55 proceeds by analysing the surrounding context of Hebrews 1:4.

⁶⁵ Ernest 1993:342 prefers ‘christological’ or ‘soteriological’ in this kind of context.

⁶⁶ Ernest 1993:350.

⁶⁷ Sieben 1974:203.

⁶⁸ Brogan 1998:19 and Ernest 1993:342.

ignorance, and by using ‘Scope’ and the idea that one must distinguish which of the Son’s modes of existence is in view, readily explains that Christ is ignorant in terms of his humanity.⁷¹ This can prompt dissatisfaction, for Athanasius does not fully explain how the one Son could be ignorant (in his humanity) and knowing (in his deity) simultaneously.

Yet even this criticism requires caution. The difficulties over Christ’s ignorance do not necessarily indicate that Athanasius is wrong about ‘Scope’, rather that further explanation is needed about how the Word’s double mode of existence leaves both modes entire.⁷² Moreover, given his concern for Scripture in its entirety and integrity, Athanasius is compelled to face such texts which are employed in the Arian arsenal, and this may perhaps somewhat ameliorate tendencies to selectivity.

More generally, it might be argued that the quest for a ‘pure’ exegetical method is chimerical. In fact, if a ‘canon’ indeed exists, inspired by one mind, then refusal to consider ‘Scope’ or something analogous would itself be misleading, distorting and separating Scripture’s data where its author intended unity. Nevertheless, given the importance of Scripture for Athanasius and his very distinctive method, his handling of it merits careful review. Granting the propriety of an exegetical method incorporating some ‘Scope’, has Athanasius reached the right ‘Scope’?

⁶⁹ See *DI* 6 and 7 on Genesis 2:17.

⁷⁰ See too Tacelli 1990:101.

⁷¹ *CAr* III.43 dealing with Mk. 13:32.

⁷² Sieben’s characterisation of the christological scope of Athanasius’ exegesis: Sieben 1974:211.

Two further matters require comment. First, tradition. Athanasius wants to show that the Nicene formulations accord with what previous generations thought, and hence must demonstrate the Nicenes used *homoousios* differently from the condemned Paul of Samosata.⁷³ Hence, too, his criticism of Arians for departing from what the Church set out at Nicaea and Ariminum:

Whose heirs or successors then are they? How can they call men fathers, whose confession, well and apostolically drawn up, they will not accept?⁷⁴

‘Scope’ does not, then, justify a purely individualistic reading of Scripture. Rather, for Athanasius, exegesis is ‘steadied by tradition.’⁷⁵

Second, Athanasius does not think the terms of revelation always retain the same meaning. Scripture has at least two senses for ‘son’, and it must be determined which is more appropriate in a given case.⁷⁶ In particular, a word may not be univocal in divine and human contexts. Thus, ‘son’ in a human context necessarily implies ~~corporeal~~ begetting, but this is not so for God: ‘...[he] begets also not as men beget, but begets as God.’⁷⁷ A critical question is how this avoids becoming uncontrolled so that ‘son’ in the two contexts has nothing common. In practice, Athanasius constantly reads ‘son’ terminology in the light of other biblical material.⁷⁸ His conception of Scripture, therefore, as a consistent body of data mitigates the risk that ‘son’ lacks all specificity. We move now to consider what doctrine of God Athanasius finally constructs.

⁷³ *De Synodis* 43. Although Stead 1974:238 doubts the term itself was condemned in 268 A.D.

⁷⁴ *Ad Afros* 7.

⁷⁵ Lyman 1993:129.

⁷⁶ E.g. *De Decretis* 6ff.

5.3. Athanasius' Conception of God.

5.3.1. *The Example of Contra Arianos I.17*

Meijering comments on the importance of *Contra Arianos* I.17 for understanding Athanasius' conception of God.⁷⁹ There, Athanasius discusses what the Arian slogans 'Once he was not' and 'He was not before his generation' imply. On their view, argues Athanasius,

...if the Word is not with the Father from everlasting, the triad is not everlasting; but a monad was first and afterwards by addition it became a triad.⁸⁰

Athanasius develops this in various ways.⁸¹ First, such a view involves our knowledge of God changing, in that the 'him' we know changes. Set against a platonic epistemology this is serious indeed: if the supreme object of knowledge were changeable, this would render knowledge of him problematic.⁸² In terms of personal relationship, too, this is troublesome, for the person one knows appears fundamentally changeable, and so raises the question of how that person is to be truly known. Athanasius then observes that once accessions to God are admitted, God may, theoretically, 'grow' without limit, and may decrease. This exacerbates the precarious nature of our knowledge of God. Since Athanasius attaches such importance to the knowledge of God as a source of life and blessing,⁸³ it is no minor problem to have this knowledge rendered uncertain.

⁷⁷ *CAr* I.23.

⁷⁸ Thus he sees sonship as illuminated by other titles *De Decretis* 15-17.

⁷⁹ Meijering 1974a:66.

⁸⁰ *CAr* I.17.

⁸¹ *CAr* I.17-19.

⁸² The ontological status of the object of a state of mind dictates the epistemological state that can be held with respect to it. Thus 'Socrates' comments in *Republic* 508d '...when [the mind's eye] is fixed on the twilight world of change [lit. that which becomes] and decay, it can only form opinions, its vision is confused and its opinions shifting, and it seems to lack intelligence [νοῦς].'

⁸³ *CG* 2.

Secondly, the change in question implies a previous lack in God:⁸⁴

...[O]nce there was not a Triad, but a monad, and a Triad once with deficiency, and then complete; deficient before the Son was originated, complete when he had come to be.

Athanasius here works through what an arianising trinity apparently implies: its pre-trinitarian form is a deficient form of trinitarian existence. The implicit argument, naturally, is that, since God is an eternally perfect being, it is wrong to see him as a deficient Trinity.

Thirdly, a Triad comprising the ungenerate monad and the generated Son is truly mixed, composed of things that are of ‘strange and alien natures and essences.’⁸⁵

Athanasius deduces that this entails the creature sharing glory with its creator, an idolatry.⁸⁶ That would contradict his basic theological convictions that creature and creator are distinct,⁸⁷ and that worship belongs to the creator alone. Further, this ‘compound’ trinity violates divine simplicity.

Fourthly, Athanasius argues that, if originated, then the Trinity is reduced to being ‘creature’. For the Trinity is from nothing if the Son is from nothing, since without the Son there is no Trinity.⁸⁸ This, of course, again conflicts with the prime theological value of sharply distinguishing between creator and created. Notably, one consequence he draws from eliminating this distinction is that it removes the further distinction between the sovereign, God, and his subjects, his creatures.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ *CAr* I. 17. Note the echo of the ‘once he was not’ slogan of the Arians.

⁸⁵ *CAr* I. 17. ...ξέναις καὶ ἄλλοτρίαις φύσεσι τε καὶ ταῖς οὐσίαις συνισταμένη [sc. ἡ Τριάς].

⁸⁶ *CG* 8.

⁸⁷ Of course others, including Arians, shared this value.

⁸⁸ *CAr* I. 18.

5.3.2. *Observations on Contra Arianos I.17f*

The discussion of *Contra Arianos* I.17-19 reflects several concerns: immutability, perfection, the creator-created distinction and the knowledge of God. Significantly, these concerns cluster around a notable biblical monotheistic idea, God's incomparability with created things.⁹⁰ Thus the Trinity's eternity and unchangeability are related to the concerns of the biblical monotheism described in chapter 2. Hence Athanasius summarises his case against an originated Trinity:

...it belongs to Greeks, to introduce an originated Triad, and to level it with things originate; for these do admit of deficiencies and additions; but the faith of Christians acknowledges the blessed Triad as unalterable and perfect and ever what It was, neither adding to it what is more, not imputing to It any loss (for both ideas are irreligious), and therefore it dissociates It from all things generated, and it guards as indivisible and worships the unity of the Godhead Itself...⁹¹

Therefore, the Son's eternity is defended because one must not dishonour the Father, but must uphold certain concepts associated with a particular monotheism. To these concepts we now turn.

5.3.3. *Unchangeableness*

Athanasius keeps returning to God's unchangeableness.⁹² In the context cited above, Athanasius argues for an uncreated Son because only thus can the Father's unchangeableness be preserved. However, unchangeableness bears on other questions too.

⁸⁹ *CAr* I.18. οὐκ αἰδεῖσθε [sc. The Arians] ... τὸν βασιλέα Κύριον Σαβαὼθ τοῖς ὑπηκοοῖς συντάπτοντες.

⁹⁰ See the earlier discussion of Jeremiah 10 and Isaiah 40-55 which deal with God's uniqueness, and the conclusions of Mauser 1991:262 that God is not rivalled, and Bauckham 1998:10 that God is sole ruler and sole creator.

⁹¹ *CAr* I.18.

⁹² Thus of the Father, he writes (*CAr* I.35) ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πατὴρ ἀτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος, καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχει, καὶ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν. Also *Expositio fidei* 3; *Ad Episcopos Aegypti* 17; *CAr* I.10, 52; II.10; *Ad Afros* 7. For the Son's unchangeability see e.g. *CAr* I.35 and 36.

First, there is revelation. Human beings need to know this unchangeable God but sin's effects mean both that this unchangeable God must be revealed to them,⁹³ and that this must happen within the confines of creation, within, that is, the realm of change.⁹⁴ Meijering rightly draws attention to the oddity of an unchanging God revealing himself and acting in a world of change.⁹⁵ Yet this conception of God also strongly connects God immanently and economically. The economy is the economy of an unchanging God and thus reflects him as he is immanently. Meijering comments:⁹⁶

If God reveals Himself in the Son, then God must be in essence the eternal Father of the eternal Son, otherwise men could not trust God's revelation, since God could then cease doing what He does.

For this reason, amongst others, Athanasius cannot be content with a kenotic Christology that envisaged the Son relinquishing some aspect of deity. That would involve the unchangeable changing.⁹⁷ Rather he upholds a deity incarnate.⁹⁸ Nor could one argue that only the Son changes while the Father remains unchanged, since Athanasius sees the Father's fatherhood as co-relatively related to the Son's sonship.⁹⁹ If the contours of the sonship change, so, too, does the fatherhood, and the First Person's fatherhood is, to Athanasius, the primary way in which he is.¹⁰⁰ This is important: the economic Father-Son relation cannot have changed from the immanent one. Hence the sonship the Son enjoys in the Incarnation does not differ from, but reveals, the immanent sonship.

⁹³ *DI* 11, 12.

⁹⁴ *DI* 13.

⁹⁵ Meijering 1974a:102 and 1974b:168.

⁹⁶ Meijering 1974a:124.

⁹⁷ Athanasius regards the Son too as unchangeable.

⁹⁸ *CAr* I.42.

⁹⁹ As in the *CAr* I.17-19 passage.

¹⁰⁰ E.g. *CAr* I.34. Lyman 1993:134 and Widdicombe 1994:159ff comment on this.

Secondly, unchangeableness bears on God's truthfulness. Stead strikingly observes that Plato associates the gods' unchangeableness to truthfulness.¹⁰¹ They do not, argues 'Socrates', appear deceptively to humanity and their words are trustworthy. Athanasius, equally, insists that God's word is unchanging: he does not withdraw his words.¹⁰² This is of no little pastoral and soteriological significance. For Athanasius, humans need idolatry and demonolatry to be conquered,¹⁰³ but only the Son's work and reliance on it achieves this. Precisely because Athanasius conceives salvation is wrought by God in his mercy, it is imperative that God be trustworthy in his unchanging promises.

It is, then, unsatisfactory to see Athanasius's emphasis on divine unchangeableness as merely 'hellenising'. He links unchangeableness to God's faithfulness and the biblical depiction of God's character as covenant-making and covenant-keeping. He comments:

Now the so called gods of the Greeks, unworthy the name, are faithful neither in their essence nor in their promises; for the same are not everywhere, nay, the local deities come to nought in course of time, and undergo a natural dissolution; wherefore the Word cries out against them, that 'faith is not strong in them,' but they are 'waters that fail,' and 'there is no faith in them.' But the God of all, being one really and indeed and true, is faithful, who is ever the same, and says, 'See now, that I, even I am He,' and I 'change not' and therefore His Son is 'faithful,' being ever the same and unchanging, deceiving neither in His essence nor in His promise...¹⁰⁴

Athanasius holds that an unchangeable God is required by the biblical concept of faithfulness, not by 'Greek' thought.

¹⁰¹ Stead 2000. II:14, citing *Republic* 380-381. Perhaps still more striking is the statement of 382e 'God is therefore without deceit or falsehood in action or word, he does not change himself nor deceive others...'

¹⁰² *DI* 6 and 7.

¹⁰³ The two are linked. E.g. *CG* 1. Christ's work on the Cross is a victory in both respects.

¹⁰⁴ *CAr* II.10.

5.3.4. *The Simplicity of God*

Pettersen states: ‘The simplicity of God is...for Athanasius, the basis of his understanding of God and the security of our holy salvation.’¹⁰⁵ This judgement is well-taken for the following reasons. Certainly, Athanasius frequently maintains that God is not compound.¹⁰⁶ Simplicity here is apparently related for Athanasius to several doctrinal *loci*. First, there is the distinction between creator and created. If God is compound or composite, then the question arises of how the composition was accomplished and by whom. Hence Athanasius observes that God is not composed from different parts but is himself the creator composing the different parts of the cosmos.¹⁰⁷ Here being ‘composed’ is set against being creator, implying that being composed means being created.¹⁰⁸ The rejection of composition in God then pertains to God as creator, not created.

Secondly, composition conflicts with God’s sovereignty. Athanasius reasons ‘that nothing masters [God],’¹⁰⁹ since he is fundamental and independent.¹¹⁰ However, a composite God, the argument runs, could be reduced into more fundamental constituents.¹¹¹ Composition is thus associated with being created and to be created is necessarily to depend on another’s will.¹¹² Yet to be dependent on another’s will is to have a master.

¹⁰⁵ Pettersen 1995:189.

¹⁰⁶ *CG* 28; *Ad Episc. Aeg* 16; *Ad Afros* 8. Stead, for instance, 2000 XXI:262 observes that ‘simple’ bears various meanings.

¹⁰⁷ *CG* 28.

¹⁰⁸ For in Athanasian thought there are only two categories, creator and created. Pettersen 1995:143.

¹⁰⁹ *CG* 29. ...καὶ μηδὲν αὐτοῦ κρατεῖν. Strictly, Athanasius introduces this as a hypothesis, but the argument requires it be uncontentious.

¹¹⁰ *CG* 28.

¹¹¹ *CG* 28.

¹¹² Since to be created is to be created from nothing in Athanasian thought *DI* 3. The non-existent cannot will itself into being.

Thirdly, a composite God rests uncomfortably with God's unchangeability. Athanasius develops his rejection of composition on the grounds it conflicts with God's unchangeableness.¹¹³ Indeed, simplicity in this sense is closely connected for Athanasius with God's trustworthiness. He associates the unreliability of people's words with humanity's composite status.¹¹⁴

However, Athanasius is discussing one type of composition. This type of composition is from initially or logically discrete and separate units, so that analytically separation is possible, by division back into more fundamental units. Athanasius has not necessarily excluded differentiations where separation is not possible. On this basis Athanasius' insistence that the differentiation yet inseparability of Father and Son does not violate simplicity is intelligible.

For Athanasius there certainly are differentiations within the godhead. He rejects Sabellianism and does not see the *homoousion* as rendering the Father and Son mere clones.¹¹⁵ However these differentiations do not constitute separability. The Father and Son are indivisible.¹¹⁶ Athanasius returns persistently to the metaphor of light and radiance.¹¹⁷ *Contra Arianos* I.12 is indicative: 'when did man see light without the brightness of its radiance?' Since without radiance, there is no light, there is no composition by a joining of two independent parts. Without the Son, there is no Father, and vice versa. This clarifies that the images of indivisible simplicity bear

¹¹³ *Ad Afros* 8 citing James 1:17.

¹¹⁴ *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 16.

¹¹⁵ The Son has all the Father's attributes except Father. But, the Father-Son relation is not symmetrically reversible (see below). *Ad Episc. Aeg* 16, *De Synodis* 45 and *De Decretis* 21. So too Stead 1974:249.

¹¹⁶ E.g. *De Sent. Dion.* 8, *Ad Episc. Aeg.* 13, *CAr* I.12, II.32, III.5.

¹¹⁷ The scriptural justification is above all Hebrews 1:3. There are other motifs, detailed by Stead 1974:247f. Beside divine fatherhood, the most prominent ones are: spring/river, word/thought and vine/branch.

again on unchangeableness.¹¹⁸ Since the image of light/radiance is of indivisibility, if one is unchanging, the other must be too: if one is not, neither is the other.

In short, Athanasius' conception of simplicity involves the notions of no composition and no divisibility, but leaves room for differentiation which is *adiairetos*. This illuminates Pettersen's contention that Athanasius' conception of divine simplicity precludes a purely 'social' model of Trinitarian relations,¹¹⁹ at least where those relations are based simply on 'will' rather than 'nature'. For as such, they render the Trinity contingent and thus both changeable and in principle separable into independent constituents.¹²⁰ This risks vesting sovereignty ultimately in these constituents, with considerable consequences for the divine monarchy, to which attention now turns.

5.3.5. *The Divine Monarchy and Monotheism*

In much of the foregoing, especially in his use of the creator-created distinction and conceptions of divine unchangeableness and simplicity, Athanasius has reflected concerns of biblical monotheism. Does Athanasius conceive of God's monarchy in similarly traditional terms?

Athanasius normally only employs *μοναρχία* terminology in his accepted writings when quoting others.¹²¹ On these occasions, though, he seems to endorse the

¹¹⁸ As Meijering 1974b:161-2 astutely observes.

¹¹⁹ Pettersen 1995:189.

¹²⁰ See e.g. *CAr* III. 10 and 65, *Ad Afros* 7 and 8 and *De Synodis* 48. See below on the discussion between being a son by will and by nature.

¹²¹ Notably *De Sententia Dion*. The monarchy was a concern for Sabellians as well as orthodox, and, suggests R. Arnou 1938:271, was part of the Arian concern too. The term is present in *CAr* IV.1 but this is commonly considered inauthentic: see Hanson 1988a.

views expressed, and anyway the question is whether Athanasius employs the idea, not simply the term.

The idea of monarchy certainly is found. In *Contra Gentes* 6 Athanasius faces the proposition that evil is a distinct entity, a view he associates with some ‘Greeks’ and some heretics, unnamed but probably Marcionites.¹²² For Athanasius this would mean either God creates evil or he is not Lord of all creation. He regards both alternatives as preposterous. His rejection of the latter alternative suggests that he thinks God is indeed lord of creation.

His detailed discussion supports this. He links together Jesus’ acknowledgement of Deuteronomy 6:4 ‘The Lord God is one’¹²³ with his confession of ‘I acknowledge you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.’¹²⁴ Lordship vocabulary is prominent here, and the great affirmation of monotheism of Deuteronomy 6:4 is strikingly joined to an affirmation of universal lordship,¹²⁵ thereby glossing monotheism with monarchical concepts. Athanasius reasons that this precludes the existence of ‘another god besides him.’

Yet what counts as ‘another god’? Answering this crucial question will significantly clarify whether Athanasius’ Trinitarian theology is consistently monotheistic. Several comments are necessary. First, Athanasius echoes the first commandment of Exodus 20:3, that Israel should have no other gods.¹²⁶ His

¹²² So Thomson 1971:15 fn.2.

¹²³ Mark 12:29.

¹²⁴ Mt. 11:25.

¹²⁵ Taking the pairing of heaven and earth as a pair denoting totality.

¹²⁶ Compare Deut. 5:7. In neither case, though, does the LXX use παρά. Rather Ex 20:3 reads ‘...θεοὶ ἕτεροι πλὴν ἐμοῦ and Deut 5:7 θεοὶ ἕτεροι πρὸ προσώπου μου.

description of the heretics' alternative or second god shows just this is at stake: it is ἄλλος...θεὸς παρὰ τοῦτον (another god besides God). Clearly dangers exist in theologising by prepositions, but the phrase 'besides God' readily suggests another independent entity, the physical reference of 'beside' carrying connotations of discrete and separable objects.¹²⁷ The terms of Romans 1:25 are illuminating: 'they worshiped the creature in place of the creator', suggesting 'they worshiped the creature in a place alongside and hence usurping the place of the creator.'¹²⁸

Secondly, Athanasius reasons that if this other god besides God existed, that would falsify God's claim to be Lord of heaven and earth. He later suggests that there cannot be two gods because this means neither was sovereign - each could exist despite the other. In effect Athanasius employs two propositions:

1. Being God means being Lord of all;
2. God is not Lord of all if there is another 'besides him': such a being would rival and affect his complete lordship.

Hence if God is not Lord of all, because there is another God 'besides him', then he is not God (nor is the other entity: they 'annihilate' each other, Athanasius reasons). The alternative to monarchy for Athanasius appears to be anarchy,¹²⁹ and, in effect, the alternative to monotheism appears to be 'atheism' (on Athanasius' definitions).

Much thus depends on Athanasius' conception of 'monarchy'. His reasons for asserting divine monarchy are further developed in *Contra Gentes*. Athanasius

¹²⁷ Although care needs to be taken not to be bound by an etymological fallacy.

¹²⁸ Comment and translation are Porter's 1995:166. The Greek is...ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα.

¹²⁹ Compare Gregory of Nazianzen *Third Theological Oration on the Son* 1 and 2, who canvasses the possibilities of monarchy, polyarchy and anarchy, but ultimately brackets polyarchy with anarchy.

observes that the cosmos is comprised of natural opposites,¹³⁰ but these are in a sense united, ‘making a unity like a single body.’¹³¹ He infers that this harmony of opposed parts is produced by a ruler who can command these naturally opposed cosmic constituents.¹³² His next question concerns the kind of master ‘who unites and binds the elements together, bringing them into harmony.’¹³³ He summarises his inferences:

...[From] the order and harmony of the universe, we must think that God is its leader, and that he is one not many. And this same orderly arrangement of the cosmos and the concordant harmony of the universe show that its leader and governor is not many but one, the Word.¹³⁴

Three observations are required. First, Athanasius infers monotheism from apparent monarchy in the cosmos. Hence denying the monarchy denies monotheism, as with Tertullian.

Secondly, polytheism’s obnoxiousness is related to divergent and conflicting wills towards creation, and thus to anarchy:

For if there were many leaders of creation...all would be in disorder on account of the many leaders, as each one drew everything to his own will and fought against the others.¹³⁵

Therefore divergent or conflicting wills among ‘divine’ entities would undo the monarchy. It is thus of first importance for Athanasius to show that the Persons do not relate as ‘rivals’. Similarly, Athanasius insists elsewhere that his trinitarian theology, which speaks of Father and Son, is not asserting there are two gods *simpliciter*, as Marcion and Valentinus did.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ CG 36.

¹³¹ CG 36.

¹³² CG 37. See Meijering 1974a:32-33.

¹³³ CG 38.

¹³⁴ CG 38.

¹³⁵ CG 38.

¹³⁶ *De Syn* 52.

Thirdly, Athanasius sees the ‘leader and governor’ of the universe as the Word, insisting that the cosmos is created through the Word. The obvious question is then how the Father can be Lord of all if actually the Son created. In *Contra Gentes* 40-44 Athanasius stresses the Son’s character as Word and wisdom and notes this coheres with a cosmos created with ‘reason, wisdom and understanding’.¹³⁷ He likens the cosmos to a lyre played by the Word/Wisdom of God, but, crucially, the musician ‘moves everything as seems good to the Father.’¹³⁸ The Father, therefore, rules the cosmos through his Son.¹³⁹ Athanasius thus preserves monarchy and the biblical datum of creation by the Word by the way he envisages the Father and Son relating.

However, neither Father nor Son are independent in this monarchy. The Son’s rule derives from his Father’s gift.¹⁴⁰ The Father, though, does not rule independently of, but rather through, his Son. The monarchical reign is an inseparable operation of both, by the Father, through the Son.¹⁴¹

5.3.6. *The Relation between Athanasius’ Theological Themes and his Doctrine of God*

The attributes of God discussed above must not be isolated one from another. If God is not simple, then he is composite, and thus compounded by another. This both undercuts his monarchy *qua* creator and entails both his subjection and his changeability. Thus all three major aspects of his doctrine of God relate to this ‘governing’ distinction between creator and created.¹⁴² The creator is not created, and

¹³⁷ CG 40.

¹³⁸ CG 42.

¹³⁹ CG 47. ...δι οὗ τὰ πάντα ὁ Πατὴρ διακοσμεῖ καὶ συνέχει...

¹⁴⁰ E.g. *In Illud Omnia* 4.

¹⁴¹ *CAr* I.61 suggests that the Son’s judgement is the Father’s work. Compare *Ad Serapionem* I.19f, 31.

¹⁴² Roldanaus 1968:349.

his non-contingent existence relates to his unchangeability, simplicity and freedom from external subjection.

However, there are also certain soteriological requirements for the cosmos, including revelation of God as unchanging, simple and as monarch. Athanasius retains throughout strongly monotheist commitments. He criticises Marcion and others for forsaking monotheism¹⁴³ and relies on the Father-Son relationship to distance himself from this criticism, for the Son is ‘from the Father’¹⁴⁴ and Athanasius distinguishes this from a relation of existing ‘beside God’.¹⁴⁵ Thus attention now turns to the scriptural basis for, and conception of, Sonship.

5.4. The Scriptural Basis for Sonship

Athanasius quotes a wide range of Scripture but keeps returning to relatively few texts.¹⁴⁶ The principal texts are John 10:30, 14:6, 9, 10 and 11 and Hebrews 1:3, frequently cited together,¹⁴⁷ so that what falls for consideration is the cumulative effect and mutual influence of these texts.

Athanasius cites the texts John 10:30, 14:9 and 10 together because he sees the same sense in each.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, he sees these texts as especially underlying the

¹⁴³ *CG* 6, *De Syn* 52.

¹⁴⁴ *CG* 41 The Son is ὁ ἐκ Πατρὸς...

¹⁴⁵ *CG* 6. ...ἄλλος...θεὸς παρὰ τοῦτον.

¹⁴⁶ Compare Leemans 1997:351.

¹⁴⁷ Thus NPNF 2nd Series vol. 4:326 n. 7 dealing with *C Ar* I.34 remarks on the frequency with which Jn. 10:30, 14:6 and 11 are found together, notably in *C Ar*. III (e.g. 5 and 16). For the use of Hebrews 1:3 in conjunction with other texts note *Ad Episc. Aeg* 13.

¹⁴⁸ *C Ar* III.5.

Nicene term *homoousios*.¹⁴⁹ The sense is that all the Father's attributes belong to the Son.¹⁵⁰ Athanasius continues:

And the Son, being the proper Offspring of the Father's Essence, reasonably says that the Father's attributes are his own also.¹⁵¹

Athanasius could be described here as asserting the unity of Father and Son according to John 10:30, but doing so in the light of John 14:9 and 10. Thus one starts with a proposition of unity,¹⁵² and a central feature is then the exegesis of John 10:30.

For Tertullian and Origen, alike concerned with monarchian challenges, it was vital to preserve the distinction of the Persons. A one-ness or harmony of wills achieved that, by necessarily presupposing personal distinction.¹⁵³ This no longer suffices in the Arian controversy, for an arianising interpretation of John 10:30 would suggest exactly that the relevant one-ness was a harmony of wills,¹⁵⁴ but only that. In principle, the one-ness of Father and Son is similar to that we have with each other through the Son.¹⁵⁵ Asserting the Son's full divinity is unnecessary. Athanasius's task, then, is to show that John 10:30 requires more than unity of will.

Athanasius' response is consistent with his underlying theology. John 10:30 means there is no partition into two.¹⁵⁶ Such a partition would be inconsistent with Athanasius' conception of divine simplicity. Yet he also takes John 10:30 with

¹⁴⁹ *Ad Afros* 6. So too J. Walker 1974:263.

¹⁵⁰ *CAr* III.4.

¹⁵¹ *CAr* III.5 τῆς δὲ οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς ἰδιον ὧν γέννημα ὁ Υἱός, εἰκότως καὶ τὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς λέγει ἑαυτοῦ εἶναι.

¹⁵² *CAr* III.4 citing John 10:30.

¹⁵³ Pollard 1956-7:336 sees Tertullian as having both 'moral' and substantial unity. On Origen he suggests the emphasis is on two wills becoming one. See above.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Pollard 1956-7:341.

¹⁵⁵ Evidenced in *CAr* III.16.

¹⁵⁶ *CAr* III.4. "Ὁ γὰρ εἰσιν, οὐχ ὡς ἑνὸς πάλιν εἰς δύο μέρη διαιρεθέντος.

14:10.¹⁵⁷ The latter stresses the mutual in-dwelling of Father and Son, which presupposes genuine distinction since one could not in-dwell the other without distinction existing. This Father-Son language, then, precludes Sabellianism.¹⁵⁸ Hence Athanasius remarks:

But they are two, because the Father is the Father and is not also the Son, and the Son is Son and not also Father; but the nature is one; (for the offspring is not unlike its parent, for it is his image), and all that is the Father's is the Son's.¹⁵⁹

This ultimately focuses attention on the Father. For it is from him that the Son has derived, albeit eternally, his nature.¹⁶⁰ The pattern of derivation undergirding the Son's sovereignty continues with his nature.¹⁶¹

While consistent with the anti-monarchian work of Tertullian in particular, this approach does not alone repel the arianising exegesis that community of wills adequately explains both texts. For this, Athanasius appeals to unity of operation,¹⁶² but more particularly to John 14:9 and the work of revelation.¹⁶³ It is imperative the creator be made known to his creatures, but who can reveal the unchangeable God but one who is himself unchangeable?¹⁶⁴ If unchangeable, then the Athanasian creator/creature distinction entails that this revealer must be uncreated, that is, fully divine, too. Arian exegesis asserting only a harmony of will between creature and creator destroys such revelation.

¹⁵⁷ The two are cited together at the end of *CAr* III.3.

¹⁵⁸ Explicitly rejected in *CAr* III.4.

¹⁵⁹ *CAr* III.4.

¹⁶⁰ *CAr* III.4.

¹⁶¹ This is not derivation as Cross 2003:467f attributes it to Athanasius. Cross's definition entails that the Father has no properties peculiar to himself. Yet Athanasius envisages the Son as all the Father is except 'Father': see note 114 above.

¹⁶² Pollard 1956-7:341 cites *CAr* III.11 in this connection. See *Ad Serapionem* I.19,20, 31.

¹⁶³ *CAr* III.5. Note the same conjunction elsewhere, e.g. *Ad Afros* 7-8. See also e.g. *DepAr* 3; *CAr* I.21; *De Syn* 38 for the importance of revelation.

¹⁶⁴ *Ad Afros* 7.

Further, Athanasius argues, if the one-ness is merely of will, this renders God compound, for his one-ness with the Son becomes only contingent.¹⁶⁵ This would, of course, violate Athanasius' cardinal value of divine simplicity. Indeed, since harmony of wills also marks God's relations with the unfallen angels, a relation based purely on harmony of wills obscures the Son's uniqueness.¹⁶⁶

Athanasius nuances John 10:30 using well-established theological values, unchangeableness, simplicity and the knowledge of God, drawn from John 14:9 and 10. Behind these lies Athanasius' prime distinction between creator and created. Arian assertions that the Son is a creature, curiously, blur just this distinction with respect to the Father-Son relation.¹⁶⁷ Athanasius cannot concede that our relationships with each other through Christ are completely comparable with the Father-Son relation. The former, being creaturely, are contingent, the latter are not.

Sonship language therefore does double duty for Athanasius. First, it explains how one may properly speak of the unity of nature of Father and Son. In the section of *Contra Arianos* III under scrutiny, this is expounded in terms both of light and radiance (once more) and of image and original, explored using the analogy of the Emperor's image.¹⁶⁸ Both have scriptural warrant, from Hebrews 1:3¹⁶⁹ and Colossians 1:15 respectively. On this basis, Athanasius draws the crucial conclusion that monotheism is not infringed:

Wherefore the Son is not another God, for he was not procured from without, else were there many, if a godhead be procured foreign from the Father's.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ *Ad Afros* 8.

¹⁶⁶ *CAr* III.10.

¹⁶⁷ Curiously, because Arianism in other respects was concerned with a creator/created distinction.

¹⁶⁸ *CAr* III.5.

¹⁶⁹ The relevant term is ἀπαύγασμα.

¹⁷⁰ *CAr* III.4. Διὸ οὐδὲ ἄλλος Θεὸς ὁ Υἱός· οὐ γὰρ ἐξωθεν ἐπενοήθη· Ἐπεὶ πάντως καὶ πολλοί, ξένης παρὰ τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐπινοουμένης θεότητος.

This contains interesting concepts and terminology. There is the vocabulary of ‘another god’.¹⁷¹ Further, the term ἑξωθεν sets out what constitutes ‘another god’. This language of externality forms the opposite of derivation, that the Son is ‘of’ the Father. Lastly, the preposition behind the translation ‘foreign from the Father’s’ is once again παρὰ.¹⁷² Thus, a vital conception for Athanasius is that the Son is not ‘independent’ of the Father.

In fact, Athanasius regards the two as indivisible and necessary implicates of each other: to name the Father is to imply the Son,¹⁷³ and vice versa. This again shows how important the light/radiance imagery is for Athanasius and his reliance on Hebrews 1:3. There is no light without radiance, no radiance without light.¹⁷⁴

The second duty this cluster of texts with their conception of sonship performs is that distinction is preserved. The Son is and has all that the Father is and has, except he is not the Father.¹⁷⁵ This does not mean that Father and Son are completely interchangeable, for the Father-Son image itself could suggest asymmetry, as does the imagery of light/radiance and image/emperor. In fact the light/radiance distinction is used precisely to say that there are not two lights.¹⁷⁶ This re-inforces Athanasius’ refusal to see the relation as that of ‘brothers’.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ See also *CG* 6.

¹⁷² Compare *CG* 6.

¹⁷³ *CAr* III.6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ad Episc. Aeg* 13.

¹⁷⁵ *CAr* III.5.

¹⁷⁶ *CAr* III.4. For Arnou 1938:271 it is exactly the processions that are so helpful in preserving a proper monotheism.

¹⁷⁷ *De Syn* 51, *CAr* I.14.

Of course, Athanasius faces an Arian version of an ‘ethical’ or ‘social’ trinity, that is, one where the wills of creature (thus contingent) and creator (thus non-contingent) are in harmony. It differs from the ‘social’ thought proposed by, for example, Moltmann,¹⁷⁸ where the communion of wills is not between creature and creator. However, obviously the question arises whether Athanasius’ misgivings would also be applicable there¹⁷⁹

5.5. The Conception of Sonship

5.5.1. *What kind of Son?*

Athanasius is aware of numerous pitfalls when describing the divine Sonship. While Sonship is scripturally given, and therefore authoritative, the term ‘son’ has different scriptural senses. Thus Athanasius distinguishes between a sonship of believing and obedience, and ‘natural’ sonship such as Isaac’s to Abraham.¹⁸⁰ Athanasius’ Arian opponents adopt the former meaning. He objects that this eliminates the Son’s uniqueness,¹⁸¹ and entails that God was not always Father.¹⁸² For Athanasius, God’s fatherhood is not contingent or secondary but ‘essential’, given that God is unchanging and simple.¹⁸³

Athanasius is therefore left with the second possibility, that the divine sonship must to some extent resemble natural human sonship.¹⁸⁴ However, since divine sonship deals with the immaterial and incorporeal, divine and natural human sonship

¹⁷⁸ E.g. Moltmann 1981.

¹⁷⁹ See 5.5.2. below for discussion of some aspects of this.

¹⁸⁰ *De Decretis* (hereafter *De Decr*) 6.

¹⁸¹ *De Decr* 6.

¹⁸² *De Decr* 10.

¹⁸³ See e.g. *Ad Afros* 8.

¹⁸⁴ *De Decr* 10.

do not completely correlate and some changes of understanding are necessary.¹⁸⁵ The divine begetting is without partition or passion,¹⁸⁶ and is eternal, not temporal,¹⁸⁷ but it is time to address another central question, whether the divine begetting is willed or not.

5.5.2. *Begotten not Made* - *Contra Arianos III.60-65*

The distinction between being begotten and being made is fundamental to Athanasius.¹⁸⁸ To be made is to exist by virtue of another's will and to be contingent. Such contingency in the Son would necessarily undermine the salvation and revelation he offers. *Contra Arianos* III 60-65 explores whether the Son is begotten by will.¹⁸⁹ Athanasius observes that claiming God's will or pleasure is precedent to the Word has a Valentinian rather than scriptural ring.¹⁹⁰ He then argues that God creates according to his will but does so through his Word.¹⁹¹ He thus brackets God's will and Word together, establishing the principle that God's will is accomplished by his Word. However, adds Athanasius, this leads to a regress:

For if He too came to be, as you maintain, by will, it follows that the will concerning Him consists in some other Word, through whom He in turn comes to be...¹⁹²

Athanasius next faces the argument that the Son must be by will, because otherwise he is Son by necessity 'and against his [God's] good pleasure'.¹⁹³ Behind this, impliedly, is the thought that God, as monarch, cannot be subject to constraint.

¹⁸⁵ *De Decr* 10.

¹⁸⁶ *De Decr* 11.

¹⁸⁷ *De Decr* 12.

¹⁸⁸ E.g. *CAr* I.25.

¹⁸⁹ Meijering 1974a:72 stresses this passage's importance.

¹⁹⁰ *CAr* III.60.

¹⁹¹ *CAr* III.61, citing James 1:18 'Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.'

¹⁹² *CAr* III.61. This resembles the argument against God creating the Word in order for the Word to create the rest of the cosmos. Both cases raise the possibility of an infinite regress.

¹⁹³ ...καὶ μὴ θέλων ἔσχευεν ὁ Θεὸς Υἱόν. *CAr* III.62.

Athanasius responds that the Arians correctly see what is contrary to will but not ‘...what is greater and transcends it...’. His argument is that what is according to nature (τὸ κατὰ φύσιν) is not against will (τὸ παρὰ γνώμην) but transcends it. He distinguishes the house a man builds ‘by counsel’ (βουλευόμενος) from the son he begets ‘by nature’ (κατὰ φύσιν). The building is external to him, the son is not. Athanasius then validates his point about things in God being by nature by appealing to attributes that belong uncontroversially to God,¹⁹⁴ that he is good and merciful. Should one apply the Arian argument about will here, it would mean ‘...we must consider that He began to be good, and that His not being good is possible...’.¹⁹⁵

This is impossible: it introduces both changeability, since God might will to become not good, and also composition, in that the attribute of goodness is not essential to God but contingent on his will.¹⁹⁶ However, unchangeability and simplicity (*qua* uncompoundedness) are associated with being creator rather than created. Hence, argues Athanasius, just as we accept God as being good by nature, not by will or external compulsion, so we should accept God as father by nature and the Son as son by nature.¹⁹⁷ Prestige is judicious: God’s ‘...fatherhood is not adventitious.’¹⁹⁸

Athanasius does not, then, accept a purely ethical trinity constructed by the Father’s will any more than an ethical trinity constructed from the harmony of wills

¹⁹⁴ At any rate in the Arian debate.

¹⁹⁵ ... σκοπεῖν δεῖ ὅτι ἤρξατο μὲν εἶναι ἀγαθός, καὶ τὸ μὴ εἶναι δὲ αὐτὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐνδεχόμενόν ἐστι.

¹⁹⁶ *Ad Afros* 8 regards this as denying divine simplicity.

¹⁹⁷ *CAr* III.62.

¹⁹⁸ Prestige 1952, 1981:154.

between creature and creator. Now, clearly, Athanasius was not faced with the proposition that trinitarian relations are purely relations of will between two eternal beings. However, his rationale for rejecting the Son being Son by the Father's will suggests an answer to this proposal: it apparently violates unchangeability. After all, 'will' involves the possibility of the opposite.¹⁹⁹ The fact that two wills (eternal Father and eternal Son) are involved is irrelevant to that point. Further, simplicity is likewise violated precisely because fatherhood and sonship appear adventitious for the First and Second Persons respectively. Athanasian principles thus suggest that, despite the non-Arian flavour of two eternal entities having a harmony of will, this proposal erodes the distinction of creator and created.

Athanasius appears sharply different here from one aspect of Origen's thought: 'Origen seems to have interpreted the Generation of the Son as an act of the Father's will,' comments Florovsky,²⁰⁰ seeing Origen as to this extent equating Son and Creation. For both are attributable to the Father's will as a sufficient cause. The cost of this position within an Athanasian framework has already been outlined.

5.5.3. *A Good Son?*

Athanasius uses two illuminating illustrations concerning the Son's position. When discussing in *Contra Arianos* II.3 the distinction between 'begotten' and 'made', he observes that sons are often called servants, because of the natural authority of fathers.²⁰¹ Therefore Athanasius apparently saw a father by nature as having authority over his son. This suggests that the filial relation between the Father and Son also involves natural authority.

¹⁹⁹ Certainly if one accepts the definition of *CAr* III.62.

²⁰⁰ Florovsky 1964:42 citing a quotation of Justinian but also relying largely on *OFP* I.2.6.

This is re-inforced by Athanasius' argument that if Solomon is treated as a proper son, although called a servant, the same applies to the Son who is also termed servant.²⁰² Sonship of the 'natural' type involves authority.²⁰³ This is doubly striking since Athanasius uses his doctrine of scriptural Scope to ascribe other problematic texts to the humanity of the incarnate Son. Yet here the servant/son terminology applies to the eternal filial relation.

The second illustration from sonship in the world comes from Absalom and Adonijah in *Contra Arianos* III.7. The context is the refutation of the charge that monotheism has been denied. Athanasius comments on what David heard about Absalom²⁰⁴ and Adonijah.²⁰⁵ In both cases there has been revolt from David by disloyal sons attempting to overthrow their father's kingdom. Yet, says Athanasius, the Son is not like Absalom and Adonijah. There has been no rivalry,²⁰⁶ nor has the Son called himself God and fomented revolt from the Father.²⁰⁷ Rather the Son has glorified the Father and done his will.²⁰⁸

Athanasius, then, recognises that natural sons sometimes infringe their fathers' sovereignty, 'unnatural' though that is. Yet this is not necessarily so, indeed should not be so, and is actually not so with the divine Son. Rather the sovereignty is preserved, but within the framework of divine sonship.

²⁰¹ *CAr* II.3. τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἐπ' ἐξουσίας, ὡς πατέρες, λέγουσι.

²⁰² *CAr* II.4. Athanasius applies Ps 116:16 to the Son.

²⁰³ The Son is such by nature, not will: see the above discussion and *CAr* III.60-62.

²⁰⁴ 2 Sam. 15:13.

²⁰⁵ 1 Kings 1:11.

²⁰⁶ *CAr* III.7 ἀμιλλα.

5.5.4. Sonship and the Repudiation of Polytheism

Here discussion must turn to Athanasius' handling of polytheism, of which he was apparently accused,²⁰⁹ and for which he also condemns others.²¹⁰ His defence is intimately related to sonship, which functions in several ways.

First, sonship means the Son is not an external (ἐξωθεν) being. Externality and being 'of' (ἐκ) form another Athanasian antithesis. Externality certainly partly distinguishes making from begetting. Created-ness involves being an external being with respect to one's creator. Thus:

For what man of right understanding does not perceive, that what are created and made are external to the maker; but the Son, as the foregoing argument has shown, exists not externally, but from the Father who begat Him?²¹¹

However, while creatures are external to their creator, externality also marks out polytheism. In the passage already cited from *Contra Arianos* III.4 Athanasius remarks that were the Son 'from without', there would be polytheism. If, then, the Persons were external to each other, this would suggest either:

- (a) one of them was created (Arianism); or
- (b) both were created; or
- (c) if both were uncreated, they were basically separable from each other and so independent. ('From without' strongly implies separability).

Option (c) further suggests that the mutual relations indicated by the correlate terms of Father and Son appear secondary: 'father' is not the fundamental naming of the First Person, contrary to Athanasius' insistence. This falls foul of Athanasius'

²⁰⁷ *CAr* III.7.

²⁰⁸ *CAr* III.7 quoting Jn 6:38.

²⁰⁹ Note here *CAr* III.7, 15.

²¹⁰ *CG* 6; *De Syn* 52 and *CAr* III.15.

²¹¹ *De Decr* 13. The relevant terms are that created things are ἐξωθεν τοῦ ποιοῦντος, while the Son is οὐκ ἐξωθεν ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ γενῶντος πατρὸς ὑπάρχει. For ἐξωθεν language see also *De Decr* 3, 23; *CAr* I.20, 25, 29; II.2, 58; III.4.

requirement of simplicity and potentially renders both First and Second Persons fundamentally unknown.

This ‘externality’ language must also be taken with that of ‘foreign-ness’. *Sonship* means that the Son is not foreign to the Father’s essence.²¹² Foreign-ness and externality are associated: the creature is both. Foreign-ness is, naturally, the contrary of *homoousios*, which is Athanasius’ synthesis of the scriptural data.

The obvious target here is Arianism, within which creature and creator are pre-eminently essences foreign to each other. Yet sometimes Athanasius speaks more widely,²¹³ and importantly describes Marcionism as involving foreign essences too.²¹⁴ He characterises Marcionite-style thought as having several entities called ‘god’.²¹⁵ To Athanasius, such ‘gods’ are not *homoousioi*, but of essences foreign to each other. This suggests that for Athanasius *homoousios* was not a term simply denoting the same generic substance, an extremely significant point.²¹⁶

The reason for thinking Marcionite ‘gods’ were not *homoousioi* is readily apparent. *Homoousios* in Athanasius’ terms involves inseparability, while Marcionite systems need not include this: thus light and radiance for Athanasius are one, and also *homoousios* with each other. There is not one without the other, neither is contingent

²¹² See *De Syn* 50 and 52 where the terminology involves ξένη οὐσία, ἀλλοτριούσιος and ἑτεροφυής. For similar terms of foreign-ness note *De Decr* 24; *CAr* I.19, 20; *CAr* II.32; *CAr* III.4, 14.

²¹³ Note especially *De Syn* 5--52 and *CAr* III.15.

²¹⁴ Note that *CAr* III.4 moves quickly from externality to foreign-ness.

²¹⁵ *CG* 6.

²¹⁶ Stead 1974:251 sees the light analogy as suggesting numerical identity.

for the other. Hence Athanasius' understanding of *homoousios* is intimately related to seeing the Son as Son by nature, not by will.²¹⁷

Thus, if First and Second Persons were mutually external and foreign, Athanasian unchangeability and simplicity would be violated. Arian christologies, which presented the Son as a creature, albeit uniquely privileged,²¹⁸ were examples of externality and foreign-ness. Yet Marcionite systems too involved externality and foreign-ness. Athanasius' reason for the Son not being external and foreign is precisely that he is the Son ἐκ the Father and therefore not the Son ἔξωθεν. Marcionite ditheism cannot employ the principle of derivation on which Athanasius relies. A relation purely of will would not suffice for this.

The stigma of polytheism is further rebuffed by insisting the Son reigns in the Father's kingdom. Here Athanasius's solution is fundamentally the same as Tertullian's. In part this derives from the *Contra Gentes* account of the Son creating at the Father's behest,²¹⁹ but elsewhere it is noted that the Father gives authority to the Son over creation.²²⁰ Thus the Lordship is the Father's²²¹ (for he gives it) but he gives it fully with respect to creation. The Son then claims no independent sovereignty,²²² and is no rival disputing the Father's due claims, but rather upholds them.²²³ The monarchy remains intact precisely because the relation is sonship, connoting authority and loyal obedience, as noted above.²²⁴ This means that a polytheism with its patterns of separable operation is far distant. Father and Son reign

²¹⁷ *CAr* III.60ff.

²¹⁸ Florovsky 1964:43. After all, in one version of Arianism, the Son alone is made directly by God.

²¹⁹ See above. M. Barnes 1997:213-215 stresses Christ as God's own power.

²²⁰ *De Decr* 30.

²²¹ *In Illud Omnia* 4.

²²² Contrast the situation envisaged in *CG* 6.

inseparably, although the Son is given sovereignty by the Father. However, the question then arises whether the Father's monarchy is defended at the Son's expense.

5.5.5. *Egalitarianism and asymmetry in divine sonship*

The foregoing clearly shows that Athanasius' soteriological scheme demands the Son's full divinity. The question is whether he envisages this including a relationship without authority between Father and Son. After all, *Contra Gentes* insists that God is not ruled by another.²²⁵ Why should this not apply to the Son?

Some passages might incline one to such an egalitarian view of Athanasius' thought. He asserts that the Son is to be given the same glory as the Father,²²⁶ and that Father and Son have co-extensive authority for, if 'all' really has been given by the Father, then the Son has it all and has it as an equal.²²⁷ There again, strikingly, the 'sending' language is taken as referring to the humanity and the Son, although sitting on the Father's right, sees the Father sitting on his right.²²⁸

In fact, two issues are at stake. One is the Son's authority over creation. The second is the Son's relation to the Father. Concerning the first, clearly the Son possesses 'full' authority: he is creator and sits on the same throne with respect to created things as the Father.²²⁹ It is, however, possible to be a delegated or derived plenipotentiary. This takes us to the second issue.

²²³ *CAr* III.7.

²²⁴ Note also Arnou's remark 1938:271 that the processions ensure the monarchy remains intact.

²²⁵ E.g. *CG* 29.

²²⁶ *Exp. Fid* 1. Commenting on John 5:23.

²²⁷ The strength of the 'all' is emphasised in *In Illud Omnia* 5 although the implication about equality is not expressly drawn.

As regards the Son's relation to the Father, Athanasius maintains that the Son is given what he has by the Father.²³⁰ The relationship, then, features derivation and, therefore, asymmetry.²³¹ The relation is, though, filial which for Athanasius, as observed above, suggests the Father's natural authority. It also suggests the Father's love, for giving readily links to such a concept.²³² This giving then means that the Son is obedient *qua* Son, not because he is a creature, although creatures also obey. He would not be a 'true' Son if he did not obey.

This is in fact what the Incarnation reveals. Athanasius quotes Jesus' words of John 6:38,²³³ while arguing that the Son is no other, second, god, but stands in obedience to the Father. This cannot be confined to the Incarnation for two reasons. First, the context is the eternal relation between Father and Son. Athanasius fails to meet his objectors' point unless he shows that the eternal relation satisfies the monarchical principles of monotheism. Secondly, Athanasius' requirement that the Incarnation truly reveal God entails that the economic relations reveal the immanent relations. As such, his conclusions, although differently phrased, resemble Tertullian's: the relation of obedience seen in the Incarnation reflects the eternal relation.

Is this inconsistent with the idea that a god is subject to nothing? In effect Athanasius must meet this argument by glossing the objection thus: a god must be subject to no external compulsion. Here Athanasius can appeal to his conception that

²²⁸ *CAr* I.61.

²²⁹ *CAr* I.61.

²³⁰ For example on the basis of John 16:15.

²³¹ Stead 1974:247-9 emphasises that the images of *homoousia* involve asymmetry.

²³² The Father's giving and loving (see *CAr* III.66) certainly are present in Athanasius. It is another issue whether these motifs are as prominent as suggested in John's Gospel.

the Son is not external and foreign, but ‘of’ and ‘proper’ to the Father. Hence there is no external compulsion. Yet he can go further on the basis of his argument about will, necessity and nature.²³⁴ Athanasius, like his opponents, is concerned to maintain that God is not liable to compulsion from outside. He is not even compelled to be good. He is, though, good by nature, and is also Father by nature. This is however extendable to the Son too. He is what he is by nature, and what he is by nature is Son, which Athanasius conceives as connoting natural authority in the Father.

Thus Athanasius’ conception of revelation in the economy of incarnation and salvation together with his doctrine of God provide strong reasons for seeing sonship in non-egalitarian terms. An eternal Son by nature does not violate unchangeability, simplicity and divine monarchy, and meets the need for a revelation of the eternal God in the Incarnation. It is therefore a notable defence of biblical monotheism, in the terms in which Athanasius has conceived it.

Conversely, a sonship in eternity solely by will, not nature, would sacrifice that monotheism. For then the Trinity would not be unchangeable and simple, and the monarchy would be rendered contingent. Further, asserting an egalitarian sonship in eternity different from the obedient sonship of the Incarnation infringes Athanasius’ principle of revelation as well. Hence, Athanasius’ principles suggest that a Trinity so structured tends to be polytheistic.

All this is, of course, within the parameters set by Athanasius’ reading of the Sonship/Fatherhood material. This must be briefly evaluated.

²³³ *CAr* III.7.

²³⁴ *CAr* III.60-62, esp. 62.

5.6. Is Athanasius' Conception of Sonship Biblical?

This requires examination under two headings, first, the significance of 'Abba' language, and secondly the import of father-son language more generally, notably the father-son language of John's Gospel, on which Athanasius draws so heavily.

5.6.1. *The 'Abba' language*

'Abba' language has soteriological significance for Athanasius. Quoting Galatians 4:6,²³⁵ he associates the sonship humans enjoy with God with the Sonship the Son enjoys. It is the Spirit of the Son who cries 'Abba' and so the Son's relation with the Father patterns our relation with him as 'Abba'. Others also lay great stress on the relations denoted by 'Abba' terms, notably Moltmann who comments that 'Abba' terminology 'reveals the inner heart of the relationship between Jesus and God'.²³⁶ This apparently takes seriously the tie between economic and immanent trinities: starting with the Incarnation, one looks within that for what is fundamental. Obviously, however, one must ask how 'Abba' should be understood.

For Moltmann this 'Abba' language is non-patriarchal, so that Sonship here does not connote the natural authority of which Athanasius spoke when discussing Solomon and David.²³⁷ Instead the keynote is an 'unprecedented intimacy' which excludes authority.

²³⁵ *DeDecr* 31, and *CAr* II.59 (*bis*). There is another citation in the probably pseudo-Athanasian *CAr* IV.22

²³⁶ Moltmann 1991:11.

²³⁷ *CAr* II.3.

This, of course, contributes to Moltmann's more general project of opposition to hierarchy in state, church and family. For our relation with the First Person is patterned on the Son's. Moltmann describes God's new kingdom:

In this kingdom God is not the Lord; he is the merciful Father. In this kingdom there are no servants; there are only God's free children. In this kingdom what is required is not obedience and submission it is love and free participation.²³⁸

Moltmann appeals precisely to the Sonship relation revealed by the 'Abba' language to show that authority is not present between Father and Son.

Moltmann cites Jeremias' work on 'Abba',²³⁹ although without specifying how much of Jeremias' argument he accepts. Jeremias certainly stresses the novelty of Jesus' father terminology, which naturally makes it an important field of inquiry. Jeremias has also been associated with arguing '...that Jesus held and taught a unique and novel view of God as near, loving and accessible, rather than distant and remote.'²⁴⁰ M. Hooker describes Jeremias' case as being that 'Abba' is 'especially intimate'.²⁴¹

However, M. Thompson notes that Jeremias both retracted the view that 'Abba' is baby-talk and anyway held it is not *simply* an indication of familiarity.²⁴² In fact, Jeremias includes obedience as an element: 'He spoke to God as a child to its father: confidently and securely, and yet at the same time reverently and obediently.'²⁴³

²³⁸ Moltmann 1981:70.

²³⁹ Moltmann 1981: 69 n. 17; 70 n. 19.

²⁴⁰ Thompson 2000:25.

²⁴¹ Hooker 1991:348.

²⁴² Thompson 2000:27. Hooker notes the criticism that the term can be a courtesy address from a disciple to a rabbi (Hooker 1991:348), and refers to the objections of Vermes and Barr to Jeremias' case.

²⁴³ Quoted at Thompson 2000:27 from Jeremias *Prayers of Jesus* 62-63.

Hence Jeremias does not support Moltmann's contention of familiarity excluding authority. Nevertheless Moltmann may still have correctly understood the 'Abba' language, where Jeremias has not, a possibility now falling for consideration.

It has often been observed that 'Abba' is recorded just once on Jesus' lips (Mark 14:36). This is perhaps a slender basis on which to construct a dominant theological theme. However, it must be remembered both that retaining the Aramaic term suggests significance, and also that 'Abba' terms are found on the lips of believers in Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15, at structurally important places in Paul's argument.

However, while Mark 14:36 certainly reflects intimacy, the whole verse and its context must also be considered. The context is prayer. While prayer may suggest intimacy, it may also imply acknowledgement of authority and obedience. The rest of the verse bears this out. God is addressed as 'Abba' in a petition where the Father's will is preferred to Jesus'. Hooker comments both on the echo of the Lord's Prayer and also that 'Once again we are reminded by Mark that Jesus is obedient to God's will.'²⁴⁴ Moltmann's disjunction between obedience and intimacy is not apparent.²⁴⁵

Turning to Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15, neither text demonstrates that intimacy excludes authority.²⁴⁶ In Galatians 4:6, a slavery is in question, but it is to something other than God. Deliverance from it does not show that intimacy with God excludes authority. As for Romans 8:15, the issue is life according to the Spirit and

²⁴⁴ Hooker 1991:349. See too her stress on obedience in the Passion 1991:22f. Similarly Cranfield 1977:433f sees the verse as upholding Jesus' obedience.

²⁴⁵ Moltmann cannot have recourse to the 'Athanasian' style of response that the 'will' refers, as a matter of 'Scope', to Jesus' humanity. Moltmann's argument requires the divinity to be in view.

life according to the flesh. However, the life of a son according to the Spirit is not said to be one of intimacy without authority. The association of disobedience with the flesh (8:7) and the command to put to death the misdeeds of the body (8:13) suggest rather that life according to the Spirit is marked by obedience.

Therefore, Moltmann's contention that 'Abba' language shows intimacy excluding authority must be adjudged a failure. However, does other Father-Son language support it?

5.6.2. *Father-Son Language*

Under this heading, the passages in which John 14:9 and 10 and 10:30 figure must be weighed, for Athanasius relies so heavily on them. However, John 5 also falls for more extended consideration. Athanasius cites this at structurally important points,²⁴⁷ but by no means as frequently as these other texts. Yet John 5 is central for the johannine material on sonship and opposition. Moreover, precisely because Athanasius does not deal with the passage at length it provides an opportunity to weigh his account of Sonship against the material he claims to synthesise, the Scriptures.

John 14:8-11 falls within the Upper Room Discourse, at a point where the argument's progression is sometimes obscure. However, B. Witherington helpfully points to a series of questions or topics and explanations within John 13 and 14,²⁴⁸ within which 14:8 provides one topic. Thus in this pattern 14:1-4 deals largely with

²⁴⁶ For fuller discussion of these Pauline texts see Appendix 7.

²⁴⁷ E.g. *CAr* III.7 (of Jn 5:23) and 36 (of 5:26) *De Syn* 49 and *Ad Afros* 7 (both of 5:19).

where Jesus is going but also introduces the way Jesus is going (verse 4), which, he says, the disciples know. Verse 5 responds to this latter element, so that 14:6f deal with the way, but also introduce the related theme of knowing not just the Way (Jesus) but the Father and seeing him. Philip's question (14:8) then picks this up.²⁴⁹ The theme, then, to be developed is that of knowing/seeing the Father in relation to Jesus.

The next question comes at verse 22. However, Jesus has already traversed several themes. From seeing God, he has moved to what the disciples will do (14:12), obedience to his commands (14:15), the Spirit's coming and the indwelling in the believer of Father and Son. These different topics are, of course, loosely related by the over-arching theme of indwelling. This is introduced in verse 10 to help explain that he who sees the Son sees the Father, and persists in verses 15-21 as Jesus comments on the Spirit and the relation between the Father and Son on the one hand and the believer on the other. Given this, verses 8-11 will be taken together, since verse 8 decisively moves the discourse on from verses 4-7,²⁵⁰ which deal largely with 'way', to seeing the Father, while verse 12 passes to a new subject, what the believer can do through God.²⁵¹

Within this framework Jesus has pronounced that he is returning to God (14:1) and is going to prepare places for his disciples (14:2). Verse 4 has introduced 'knowing', so important in what follows. At this stage, the knowledge could simply

²⁴⁸ Witherington 1995:249. Thus in 13:25 the question is who will betray, in 13:36 where Jesus is going, in 14:5 about knowing the way, in 14:8 about seeing the Father and in 14:22 about being revealed to the world.

²⁴⁹ Compare the remarks of R. Schnackenburg 1980 III:63 on the sub-unit's ending at v. 7.

²⁵⁰ For vv. 4 -7 as a sub-unit see Schnackenburg 1980 III:63 and Witherington 1995:249.

²⁵¹ So Brown 1971 II:632. Ridderbos 1997:496 also sees a transition here.

be intellectual. This is apparently Thomas' initial understanding (14:5), with the objects of knowledge being the destination and the way. However, verse 6 develops knowledge more personally.²⁵² The way is a person, Jesus, as is the destination, the Father. Jesus presents himself as the way to God (14:6a), whom he refers to as the Father, and to whom he alone leads (14:6b).

This implies that the disciples, and by extension the rest of humanity, do not already have places with God and without Jesus have no access to God. The conditional clause of verse 7a confirms this: 'If you have known me you will know my Father.' Similar charges of lack of knowledge of God occur earlier, notably at 8:19,²⁵³ where lack of knowledge of Father and Son is related later to dying in one's sin. 'Knowledge', then, has salvific associations.²⁵⁴ However, 14:7b sharpens the point by stating that the disciples already know the Father and have seen him.

Philip's question (verse 8) takes the language of knowledge and sight in a still more strongly revelatory direction ('show us the Father'), while the importance of revelatory knowledge is evident in the closing phrase: 'it will suffice for us'.²⁵⁵

Verse 9 next indicates several things. First, revelation of the Father has taken place in Jesus. Second, this is a full revelation since one has seen the Father in seeing Jesus, implying no additional revelation is necessary.²⁵⁶ Third, the revelation of God that Jesus brings subtly differs from an ordinary prophet's. Jesus' revelation is not a

²⁵² Ridderbos 1997:493: 'It is a way he not only points to but *is*...'

²⁵³ See also 7:28 and 8:55.

²⁵⁴ Note in this respect that Brown 1971 II:631 explores echoes of covenant relationship in the knowledge terminology.

²⁵⁵ Again, see Brown 1971 II:632 for the idea that Philip has in mind a theophany on the Sinaitic model.

body of information external to himself, something already alluded to in verse 6.²⁵⁷

Verse 9 stresses rather that he himself in his person reveals the Father. Fourth, not knowing that Jesus is this revelation of the Father means one does not know Jesus. Jesus' own identity is inseparably linked to his relation to the Father. Fifth, revelation of the First Person is not simply revelation of 'God' but of the 'Father'.

The obvious issue this raises is how Jesus can so reveal the Father. Verse 10 starts to answer this: Jesus and the Father in-dwell each other. Some factors suggest that this relationship, while thus certainly mutual, is not completely symmetrical.²⁵⁸ First, the relationship is Father-Son, which *prima facie* hints at some irreversibility. Secondly, a certain priority for the Father appears. Jesus' words are not 'from himself' (ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ), indicating his verbal revelation is ultimately initiated by the Father, not independent or self-generated.²⁵⁹ Similarly, Jesus's actions are not simply independent but rather originate with the Father. They are joint actions, in which the two are inseparably involved.

The significance of inseparable operation will be further developed in chapter 7.6 below. Suffice it here to observe that this again recalls earlier material, notably 5:30 and 36. There Jesus asserts his actions are not independent (5:30) but are what his Father has given him to do, and testify that the Father has sent him (5:36). For Ridderbos, Jesus' speaking the Father's words illustrates that Jesus in-dwells the Father, while the Father's acting through Jesus illustrates his in-dwelling Jesus.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Compare Barrett 1978:383 '...all search for God must look to the decisive revelation in Jesus.'

²⁵⁷ Jesus himself is the way, not merely one who discloses it as something external to himself.

²⁵⁸ Thus Barrett 1978:383 'The relation...is not completely reciprocal...'

²⁵⁹ Compare earlier material in similar terms (8:28 and 38 and 12:49-50).

The material in verse 10 is striking. First, Jesus' revelation of the Father is tied to his personal relationship with the Father. That relation is described in these unusual terms of mutual indwelling. Secondly, this relation, during the Incarnation, to put it no higher, is marked by Jesus' insistence that he is not acting independently.²⁶¹ Non-independence is therefore critical in understanding the Father-Son relation. Brown's comment is apt: 'Thus, precisely because neither his words nor his deeds are his own, these words and deeds tell men that Jesus is intimately related to the Father.'²⁶² Thirdly, Jesus' words and works are yoked together here, as elsewhere.²⁶³

Verse 11 features a call to believe. The content of belief is that Father and Son indwell each other. The context makes this eminently intelligible. Jesus is the access to the Father and makes him known. Jesus uniquely can do this because of his relationship with the Father. Believing that Jesus has that relationship is thus critical. Verse 11 closes by commenting that one must believe, if nothing else, because of the works, which, earlier material has already told us, indicate the Father's relation with Jesus.²⁶⁴

Athanasius evidently catches some of the key-notes of this sub-unit. He uses verse 9 above all to draw out the fullness of Jesus' revelation, and verse 10 to illustrate a unique in-dwelling relationship, marked by unanimity of word and action. However, while often citing the verses together, each verse tends to be a separate citation. This obscures their connection, which would actually strengthen his case that

²⁶⁰ Ridderbos 1997:495.

²⁶¹ The relevant terms are ἀπ' ἐμαυτοῦ (5:30 and 8:28 in reference to 'doing'; 7:17, 12:49 and 14:10 in reference to speaking; and 7:28 and 8:42 in reference to coming) and ἀφ' ἐαυτοῦ (5:19 in reference to 'doing'; and 7:18 and 16:13 in reference to speaking, although the latter deals with the Holy Spirit).

²⁶² Brown 1971 II:632.

²⁶³ E.g. Jn 8:28. Barrett 1978:384 '...both [sc. Words and works] alike are revelatory...'

Jesus can only reveal as he does because of his relation with the Father. Moreover, he does not draw out the emphasis in verse 10 on the Father's priority and the non-independence of Jesus' words and works (effectively he relies on verse 10a). This omission tends to obscure the close relations this passage has with other material, notably chapters 5 and 8. However, verse 10b and c again support his case. After all, as will be evident in dealing with John 5, this intimate execution of the Father's deeds and speaking of the Father's words supports Athanasius' thesis of a divine Son who satisfies the requirements of monarchical monotheism.

Brown remarks that the passage 'has only secondary metaphysical implications about life within the Godhead' and stresses the importance of the *shaliach* motif for understanding how Jesus' actions are the Father's.²⁶⁵ Athanasius, of course, concedes that his synthesis of such passages uses a term Scripture does not. His point, though, is that his synthesis is a necessary implication. For without the implication, the primary work could not be done.²⁶⁶

Turning to John 10:30, this is a vital member of Athanasius' *catena* of texts.²⁶⁷ The unit in which it falls is best taken as verses 22-39. Verse 22 marks the start with editorial comment giving time and location markers, the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple in the Temple.²⁶⁸ In verse 40 there is a shift of place (back beyond the Jordan) and subject-matter (the fulfilment of the Baptist's testimony).

²⁶⁴ E.g. 5:36.

²⁶⁵ Brown 1971 II: 632.

²⁶⁶ Thus Stibbe aptly comments 1993:156 '...the suggestion of divinity is...implicit.'

²⁶⁷ It is quoted or referred to some 30 times.

²⁶⁸ Stibbe 1993:118 comments on the symbolism: Jesus is the New Temple (2:13-22). The Temple is, of course, the place where God is known and worshipped.

The comment of 10:30 comes in Jesus' response to the question whether he is the Messiah (10:24).²⁶⁹ His reply is disturbing. Verse 25a seems to imply a rebuke in that his earlier words render their question redundant. Verse 25b refers to his works done in the Father's name, which testify to him, again implying that this is testimony already known, but rejected.²⁷⁰ Once again Jesus' words and works are paired,²⁷¹ and once again Jesus refers his works to the Father's initiative, not his.

Verse 26 states why the extant evidence of Jesus' works has been rejected: the Jews²⁷² constituting the audience are not 'of my sheep'.²⁷³ Hence, it is small wonder that the evidence is rejected and the question of Jesus' identity continually recurs.²⁷⁴ With this introduction of who Jesus' sheep are, the discussion takes another turn. Verse 27 explains Jesus' contention that this audience is not of his sheep. His sheep are distinguished by 'hearing' (obeying or responding positively to) his voice.²⁷⁵

Having introduced the relationship between Jesus and his sheep in terms of their response to him, Jesus now describes how he and his Father treat the sheep. Jesus the shepherd gives life (10:28). Life is, of course, a major johannine theme and the immediate link is no doubt with earlier material in chapter 10.²⁷⁶ Chapter 11 greatly develops what is said here, especially as Lazarus 'hears' the voice of Jesus

²⁶⁹ Brown 1971 I:406 notes that the question is apt in its present setting given the shepherd imagery earlier in the chapter, a motif which could have messianic overtones.

²⁷⁰ Note how 10:19-21 frames the question, by telling the reader that the Jews know of Jesus' works. The healing of the man born blind (ch. 9) raises similar issues.

²⁷¹ In contrast to the Jews of 10:19-21 who apparently find great difficulty in joining what Jesus teaches (His sonship) with what he does (the signs).

²⁷² The term 'Jews' is retained, but it must be noted that in the dialogue the Jews tend at times to assume a representative character for humanity in rebellion against God (Cp. 8:23). For simplicity, the designation 'the Jews' is kept here, but with that representational connotation.

²⁷³ Note the contention of L. Keck 1996 that the language of origin also is indicative of destiny.

²⁷⁴ Stibbe 1993:118 observes '...the perversity of their [sc. the Jews'] intense hostility...' throughout this unit.

²⁷⁵ See 10:4 and 14.

²⁷⁶ Especially 10:10.

(11:43-44) even in the tomb. However, chapter 5 provides highly significant paving material, with its depiction of the Son who gives life and calls people from the dead (5:25ff). In this sense, it is unduly atomistic to read chapter 10 without chapter 5.

Verse 28 ends with the assurance that Jesus' sheep cannot be taken from his hand. This forms the parallelism between verses 28 and 29. Nothing can take the sheep out of the Father's hand either. The correct reading and syntax of verse 29a is obscure.²⁷⁷ However, two points do emerge: first, the Father gives to the Son, thereby co-ordinating their action. The Son's actions, then, in holding his sheep in his hand are not independent of the Father, but are actions at the Father's initiative, in line with verse 25's statement that Jesus' actions are in the Father's name.²⁷⁸ Their actions are integrated. Secondly, as regards the sheep, being in Jesus' hand can also be represented as being in the Father's hand. Being with the one necessitates being with the other.²⁷⁹

At this point, the statement of 10:30 is readily intelligible. 'Small wonder' the one-ness of action in verses 28f leads to the one-ness of Father and Son.²⁸⁰ However, this obviously raises the question whether Athanasius has not placed too much weight on one-ness here. Calvin's comment is telling:

The ancients made a wrong use of this passage to prove that Christ is (ὁμοούσιος) of the same essence with the Father. For Christ does not argue about the unity of substance, but about the agreement that he has with the Father, so that whatever Christ does will be confirmed by the power of his Father.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ See Brown 1971 I:403 and Ridderbos 1997:370. The smoothest construction is to take the passage as talking about the Father, who is greater than all, giving sheep to the Son.

²⁷⁸ D. Carson 1991:393 comments: 'All that Jesus says and does is merely the embodiment of the Father's will.'

²⁷⁹ Compare the general johannine theme that he who has the Son has the Father too. Cf I Jn 2:23.

²⁸⁰ Carson 1991:394.

Harmony of will is undisputed. The question is whether harmony of will alone sufficiently explains this one-ness. Carson writes: ‘The immediate context is the most important single control.’²⁸² It is vital to observe that the Jews respond by proposing to stone Jesus (10:31). Jesus’ response (10:32) refers again to his works, effectively forcing his accusers again to consider his words and works together.²⁸³ The ‘making’ terminology of verse 32 is picked up as the Jews specify their charge, that Jesus has ‘made’ himself God.²⁸⁴ The phraseology is not identical to the accusation of 5:18,²⁸⁵ but similarities exist, notably in the ‘making’ language and the charge that Jesus does this himself.²⁸⁶ Once again, the significance of the chapter 5 material emerges.

The subsequent context of 10:30 therefore shows that the Jews see Jesus as claiming more than a harmony of wills between a creaturely man and his god. There is an element of blasphemy: making oneself God. That implies independent and rivalling action, although verses 28f have underlined precisely that the Son is no rival.

Jesus responds in verses 34-36 that Scripture can legitimately call those to whom it came ‘gods’.²⁸⁷ It is then even more fitting for the one whom God set apart and sent into the world to be called ‘son’.²⁸⁸ This distances Jesus’ sonship from the sonship mentioned by Psalm 82. This also tells against mere unity of wills. One Arian contention turned on the similarity between the one-ness of Jesus and God and the one-ness others enjoy with God. Jesus’ words go beyond that. Hence Athanasius

²⁸¹ Calvin Translation Society edition.

²⁸² Carson 1991:394.

²⁸³ See above on 10:19-21 and 25.

²⁸⁴ Ποιῆν.

²⁸⁵ making himself equal to God.

²⁸⁶ Brown comments on the Jewish error 1971 I:408 ‘For John, Jesus never makes himself anything; everything that he is stems from the Father.’

²⁸⁷ Quoting Ps 82:6.

rightly objected that the Arian solution did not preserve the uniqueness of Jesus' sonship.²⁸⁹

In verses 37f, Jesus reverts to his works and urges the Jews to believe. Once again, Jesus' actions are presented as grounds for belief. Action and person are linked, as in chapter 14:8-11, and this tends to tie the two passages. This is reinforced by 'belief' in Jesus being associated with the Father and Son indwelling each other (verse 38b).

This final statement repays attention. First, it glosses the one-ness of 10:30 by reference to mutual indwelling.²⁹⁰ This vindicates the refusal to take verse 30 in a Sabellian or modalist direction, since indwelling presupposes personal distinction.

Secondly, this further ties this passage to 14:8-11. This significantly supports Athanasius' consistent co-citation of John 10:30 with 14:9 and 10. The explanation of oneness in 10:30 in terms of revelation (14:9) and in-dwelling (14:10) is less arbitrary than might first appear.

Thirdly, Jesus reiterates that the works are his Father's, underlining that there is 'unity of action',²⁹¹ and that Jesus' deeds are neither independent of the Father nor inconsistent with his will.²⁹² However, at another level, this can suggest that Jesus does the kind of things that God does - divine actions. Hence it is appropriate to recall

²⁸⁸ Ridderbos 1997:374 contests this, but understates the extent to which the sending language is tied to the uniqueness of Jesus' relationship with the Father.

²⁸⁹ E.g. *CAr* III.10. See also *CAr* I.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Barrett 1978:321. 'John here refers back to v. 30...' Compare Carson 1991:400.

²⁹¹ So Stibbe 1993:118.

²⁹² Barrett 1978:320 helpfully refers to ch. 8 and the principle that a son's actions resemble his father's.

chapter 5's discussion about Jesus doing the same kind of things on the Sabbath as his Father does.²⁹³ Two factors suggest this idea of divine actions is included here: the subsequent reaction of verse 39 (see below) and the discussion in verse 28 of what Jesus will give his sheep, eternal life.²⁹⁴ That appears to be a divine prerogative: the action is tied closely to the agent's identity.²⁹⁵

This unit closes with further action by the Jews (10:39). They seek to stone him, but he moves 'out of their hand' - an ironic contrast to the hand of the Father and Son, for nothing can remove one from there. This second taking of stones re-inforces the interpretation of verses 30f, since the Jews continue to think in terms of blasphemy. This strengthens the case against seeing the unity of verse 30 as simply referring to harmony of wills.

Is Athanasius mishandling the text, as Calvin implies? No doubt John's discussion has been of the 'functional' and 'operative' rather than expressly metaphysical.²⁹⁶ The question, of course, is how these 'functions' can be performed without metaphysical implications. Calvin himself opens the door to this when commenting on 10:37 and the statement that Jesus' works are those of the Father:

He gives them this name, because those works were truly Divine, and because so great power shone in them, that they could not be ascribed to a man.²⁹⁷

On that basis Carson's judgement is apt: '...some kind of metaphysical unity is presupposed.'²⁹⁸ Athanasius draws this out less by extended contextual exegesis, but rather by reading the passage in the light of chapter 14:9 and 10. This seems

²⁹³ Developed by Carson 1991:399f.

²⁹⁴ Again, a theme of chapter 5.

²⁹⁵ Especially when in the context of 10:18 which refers to Jesus being able to take up his life again.

²⁹⁶ Brown 1971 I:407 comments of 10:30 '...it is a unity of power and operation.'

²⁹⁷ Calvin Translation Society.

legitimate given the links between the two passages.²⁹⁹ It has, however, been observed in this discussion of John 10:30 that another cognate passage is the Sabbath dispute of chapter 5.

The foregoing material has noted the way that chapter 5 relates to both chapter 10:22-39 and 14:8-11. Chapter 5 itself seems self-contained,³⁰⁰ sandwiched between the Galilee material of 4:46-54 and 6:1ff. The content contrasts both with what immediately precedes,³⁰¹ and with the other Sabbath healing that John records.³⁰² The tone is strongly forensic, with terminology of evidence and accusation.³⁰³ The chapter moves from Jesus as ‘defendant’ (5:17ff) to the accusers becoming accused in their turn (5:45f).³⁰⁴

The unit starts with a deceptively straightforward healing miracle (5:1-9a).³⁰⁵ The sting comes when verse 9b states the day, the Sabbath. This immediately changes the tone for the reader, since what had appeared unproblematic now has the colour of illegality.³⁰⁶ It is scarcely surprising that an investigation into legality follows, culminating in the Jews’ discovery that it was Jesus who had healed and instructed

²⁹⁸ Carson 1991:395. Also Stibbe 1993:118 ‘...this [sc. v. 30] is to be interpreted as a claim for ontological equality...’

²⁹⁹ Obviously the preferable exegetical strategy is to work both with the cognate passage and the immediate context.

³⁰⁰ So Witherington 1995:133.

³⁰¹ In 4:46-54 Jesus is sought, is in Galilee (associated often with faith), and discovers the ruler’s faith. In ch. 5 Jesus seeks out the paralytic, is in Jerusalem (associated with disbelief) and is delated by the one he heals to disbelieving authorities.

³⁰² In ch. 9 the man born blind wants to believe vv. 35-38.

³⁰³ So J. Neyrey 1988:11 and Witherington 1995:136. Neyrey even talks of a formal process, while Witherington sees it as informal.

³⁰⁴ See Witherington 1995:136.

³⁰⁵ Barrett 1978:208 notes the similarity to many synoptic miracles.

³⁰⁶ See Ridderbos 1997:187 on the illegality of carrying objects on the Sabbath.

the man (verses 10-15). Verse 16 then summarises that the Jews persecuted³⁰⁷ Jesus for doing this on the Sabbath.³⁰⁸

Verses 17-19 report Jesus' initial defence to this charge of Sabbath-breaking. He answers that his Father continues to work and so does he. Impliedly this appeals to the principle that God 'works' on the Sabbath without breaching it, exercising his unique creative and judging powers.³⁰⁹

Two issues lurk in Jesus' words. One is his relation with the Father, which is immediately pursued in verse 18, and the other is the nature of the works Jesus does on the Sabbath. This issue is developed in verses 19-30.

The Jews' reaction in verse 18 treats Jesus' defence as exacerbation, not exculpation. It provides another, greater, reason for seeking his death.³¹⁰ Illuminatingly, they focus on the claim to a filial relationship, which they interpret as Jesus 'making himself equal to God.'³¹¹ It is this charge that Jesus answers in verses 19ff.³¹²

Notably, personal distinction is preserved. Jesus has not been understood as saying he is the same as God, but equal to God. 'Equal' suggests another to whom one is equal. Next, there is the formula 'making himself', implying Jesus simply

³⁰⁷ A possible translation of ἐδίωκον would be 'prosecute': Harvey 1976:50 and Witherington 1995:139.

³⁰⁸ The verb for 'doing' is once again ποιεῖν but here it is not yet loaded with the same significance as later in the chapter.

³⁰⁹ Compare Neyrey 1988:22-26; Brown 1971 I:217.

³¹⁰ This becomes a theme running through subsequent chapters, that the Jews wish to kill Jesus. Barrett 1978:214 suggests sabbath-breaking was a 'comparatively trivial offence' as against what had just been said.

³¹¹ Ἰσὺν ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ.

claims this for himself. This strongly recalls Adam's pride and rebellion in his attempt to be like God.³¹³ 'Likeness' language is, of course, immensely important in OT monotheism. Creatures are not 'like' God, a frequently recurring point.³¹⁴ 'Likeness', though, again implies distinction, and so saying one is 'like' God means setting oneself as 'another' god, beside Yahweh.³¹⁵ In that way Jesus' claim *prima facie* infringes biblical monotheism, for someone other than God is claiming likeness. Athanasius' own concepts of monotheism co-incide with this.³¹⁶

Jesus' defence from verse 19 unfolds interestingly. The crucial point is indicated by the *inclusio* between verses 19a and 30a, that the Son 'does'³¹⁷ nothing on his own.³¹⁸ This meets the 'making himself equal' charge (5:18). If the Son 'does' nothing on his own, that includes the 'making' of verse 18, so Jesus has not acted independently in claiming God as his Father.³¹⁹ If he has not acted independently, with whom has he acted and how? Verse 19b provides the answer: what Jesus does he does because he sees the Father doing it. The Son does 'like' actions.³²⁰ This establishes a central principle for what follows. The Son does 'like' actions - the actions that are the divine prerogative - but does so, not independently, but at the Father's behest. Jesus then describes in verses 21-29 just the 'prerogative' actions of God, giving life and exercising judgement.

³¹² See Stibbe 1993:77-78; Neyrey 1988:20.

³¹³ Brown 1971 I:213.

³¹⁴ Note the use of the ὁμοιω group in this connection. God cannot be 'likened': Isa 40:18, 25; 46:5, and the king of Babylon is judged for his attempt to liken himself to God (Isa 14:14). For the thought but different terms see also Ezek 28:2,6. Jer 10:6,7 (not in LXX); 49:19 (=30:13 in LXX τίς ὥσπερ ἐγώ;); 50:44 (= LXX 27:44 τίς ὥσπερ ἐγώ;) 51:19 (= LXX 28:19 οὐ τοιαύτη μερὶς τῷ Ιακωβ).

³¹⁵ Thus the king of Babylon (Isa 14:14) and the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28) are not necessarily claiming to be Yahweh, but to be 'another'.

³¹⁶ See e.g. CG 6 on 'another god besides' and CA^r III.4 on an external god being 'another' god.

³¹⁷ Ποιεῖν again.

³¹⁸ S. Pancaro 1975:209 draws attention to the *inclusio*. Neyrey 1988:16f discerns a slightly different pattern.

³¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Carson 1991:250.

It is important here to advert to the *shaliach* or agency principle.³²¹ After all, an agent can represent his sender without being ontologically equal. The classic biblical example is Moses, made ‘like God’ to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1).³²² Agency principles are certainly strongly suggestive for passages like this one, for example in the way that an agent is like the one who sent him, but is obedient to his sender.³²³ However, for Borgen this may not entail being content with Arian explanations, for he points out that specifically the Son is sent and he is a heavenly figure who descends, not simply an obedient man.³²⁴ One may add that the full vesting of these particular powers, as well as the Son being worshiped as the Father is (5:23), suggests something beyond a merely human *shaliach*.³²⁵

The theme that the Son is no independent rival is finally repeated in verse 30b - the Son seeks the will of him who sent him. Therefore, to refuse to accept Jesus as the Son who rightly does these things on the Sabbath does not uphold, but defies, God’s honour (5:23b). Those so refusing the Son are revealed ultimately as God’s enemies.³²⁶ Importantly, verse 30b finally and decisively glosses the lack of independence initially mentioned in verse 19. That lack of independence is not simply a consensuality, but a relationship where the Father’s will has primacy.³²⁷

³²⁰ ...ὁμοίως ποιεῖ.

³²¹ Associated particularly with Borgen’s essay 1970.

³²² Cited by Carson 1991:249. ...δέδωκά σε θεὸν Φαραῶ...

³²³ Borgen 1970:138f.

³²⁴ See 3:13, 31; 6:46.

³²⁵ Thus, an angel could be described as a *shaliach* but must not be worshipped.

³²⁶ Stibbe 1993:77. Elsewhere he describes such a person as *theomachus* 1993:118.

³²⁷ See Carson 1991:250 and 259. Compare Jn 4:34 and 6:38.

This primacy continues in 5:31ff where Jesus discusses testimony about himself. He is not self-attesting (verse 31).³²⁸ Instead there is other testimony, notably that of the Baptist (5:33), of the works (5:36) and of the scriptures (5:39). Yet, finally, these testimonies all originate in God.³²⁹ The Father provides testimony to the Son, that he is the Son.³³⁰

The chapter closes with the tables turned.³³¹ At verse 19 Jesus was defending himself against charges of blasphemy. By verse 45 Jesus points to the indictment against his accusers, that they have not listened to Moses, something associated with their seeking glory from each other and not from God (5:44).

Several features merit comment. First, the relation between words and works. In chapter 10:33 the Jews drive a wedge, as it were, between Jesus' words and works: their objection focuses on the blasphemy of his words, not his works. Yet here in chapter 5 the works present the initial problem, but are legitimated by Jesus' words as divine prerogatives.

Secondly, those divine prerogatives are not asserted to rival the Father. Jesus' defence is that he asserts these things not in independence of, but in obedience to, his Father.³³² This is part of the Gospel's general pattern. His mission,³³³ his words,³³⁴ his

³²⁸ Jesus does not pose as an independent authority: Barrett 1978:220. Similarly H. Odeberg 1929:219 and Carson 1991:259.

³²⁹ Brown 1971 I:227.

³³⁰ That Jesus is the Son is above all 'the truth' to which the Baptist testifies (5:33 in the light of 1:29-34, esp. v 34).

³³¹ See e.g. Brown 1971 I:229.

³³² In particular note the legitimation of Jesus' sonship in ch. 8 where obedience to his Father is its hallmark (8:38, 47).

³³³ 7:28 and 8:42.

³³⁴ 7:17f, 8:38, 12:49 and 14:10.

supporting testimony³³⁵ and his works³³⁶ are all not independent but in conformity with his Father's will. The Gospel presupposes and vigorously asserts a divine monarchy.

5.7. Conclusions

Athanasius' basic theology provides these constraints for a trinitarian account:

1. the difference between created and uncreated creator;
2. the consequent need to preserve God's monarchy (although this is not his terminology); and
3. the need to ensure and respect a true knowledge of God through the Incarnation of the Christ.

His understanding of the eternal filial relation is integral to satisfying these constraints. Since a 'Son' is not necessarily a creature, he can assert that the Second Person may be distinct from the Father but uncreated. Athanasius combines this distinction of Persons in a filial relationship with a pattern of derivation. The Son has no independent, rival sovereignty, but derives his rule as something the Father gives. As a 'true' son, the Son does his Father's will and carries it out. Hence the divine monarchy is upheld. Further, as Son, the Son derives his nature from his Father and so must be truly 'like', indeed the same, in essence as his Father. This gives Athanasius' account of the Trinity a patrocentric orientation. This is reflected in his account of the primacy accorded to the Father's will, while the Father's loving generosity to his Son, although present, is less emphasised.

³³⁵ 5:31ff, 8:18.

³³⁶ 5:19, 30 and 8:28.

While distinct, Father and Son are nevertheless inseparable and this is reflected in their joint works of creation and in the Incarnation. This repels polytheistic associations that might arise from the idea of personally distinct spheres of operation.

This understanding of Sonship is warranted because the Scriptures, especially John's Gospel, provide a description of the relations between the Persons, which in turn furnishes a rationale for the fulness and adequacy of revelation in the incarnate Son. This preserves the knowledge of God, which was so important to Athanasius soteriologically.

This presentation is authentically johannine. For in John's Gospel the Son has full divine powers with respect to creation and is, of course, presented as uncreated, yet God's monarchy is preserved, because the Son's relation to the Father is precisely that of a 'Son', one who does what his Father does and does his will. Within this framework, an exclusively ethical account of the Father-Son relation does not adequately account for the divine prerogatives, but a union of substance with concomitant ethical relations does.

Hence, for all the peculiarity of Athanasius' citations, his trinitarian account is consistent with, and supportive of, his account of monotheism, drawn as it is from his understanding of the unchanging, simple, creator. There are two important corollaries: this is a strongly monarchical account, in which the monarchy is an eternal feature. Further, the economic relations are indeed revelatory of the immanent.

CHAPTER 6: HILARY OF POITIERS AND PERFECT BIRTH FROM A PERFECT GOD

It is proposed that:

6(a). Hilary's account of God's nature dominates his trinitarian theology, because the Son is generated 'of' this nature.

6(b). God is presented as a fully self-authoring and infinite being who is unknowable through human speculation.

6(c). Knowledge of this God is nevertheless necessary for human felicity.

6(d). Accordingly this fully self-authoring being can be known only through his own self-disclosure, which takes place in the Incarnation of his Son.

6(e). Since God is fully self-authoring, there can be no externality that is independent of him or more powerful than him.

6(f). Since God is a fully self-authoring being who is perfect, he begets perfectly without division in that his begotten Son must partake perfectly of his nature and he himself continues to do so.

6(g). Hilary's trinitarian account heavily utilises language of derivation ('of') and in-dwelling, grounding the latter in the former.

6(h). Derivation by generation from such a God precludes both God being solitary and also ditheism.

6(i). Ditheism is excluded by developing johannine 'of' and 'in' terminology, which together negate externality between Father and Son, while upholding personal inseparability and asymmetrical distinction.

6(j). Hilary envisages order in the eternal relation between Father and Son because the Incarnation, his source of revelation for Trinitarian relations, reveals this.

6(k). The 'of' and 'in' terminology protects Hilary's account of the Father-Son relationship from ontological subordination because, while the Son obeys, he obeys as a son, and does not obey an external independent being.

6(l). The Son's works in the economy are presented as also works of the indwelling and inseparable Father.

6.1. Introduction

Hilary of Poitiers¹ writes: '[My soul] was inflamed with a passionate desire to apprehend Him or to know Him.'² It is clear why. All Hilary's hopes ultimately fix on God,³ particularly the hope of eternal life,⁴ since there is no eternal life without knowing God.⁵ True knowledge of God thus matters enormously for Hilary.⁶

There is, however, a problem. This God is not easy to know, for he is infinite.

Hilary writes:

For it seemed that the greatness of God so far surpassed the mental powers of His handiwork, that however far the limited mind of man might strain in the hazardous effort to define Him, the gap was not lessened between the finite nature which struggled and the boundless infinity that lay beyond its ken...⁷

Hilary presents himself in *De Trinitate* as realising this independently of Scripture,⁸ but adds that he finds it confirmed there, citing Psalm 139.⁹ Is there not, therefore, an awful problem, that, while our hope lies in this infinite God, his infinity renders him undiscoverable? God's very character and nature create the problem.

Hilary's answer is that true knowledge of God is found through his Son. His fears of extinction are answered as he contemplates Scripture's teaching about the Son

¹ R. Hanson 1988b:459 notes the paucity of information about Hilary's personal life, estimating his birth 310-320 and his death ca. 367 (1988:468).

² *De Trinitate* (hereafter *DeT*) I.3. The Latin text is that of Cerf 2001, and the English translation that of NPFF 2nd series.

³ *DeT* I.3.

⁴ *DeT* I.9 and 10. See *DeT* III.14 on John 17:3.

⁵ *DeT* III.14 notes that eternity of life involves knowing the true God and the Son he sent (quoting John 17:3). In *DeT* I.11 Hilary refers to knowledge of Father and Son as *cognitio salutaris*.

⁶ Cf. Meijering 1982: 23.

⁷ *DeT* I.6. A. Harman 1973:388 remarks that God transcends human thought and speech.

⁸ Doubts have been voiced about whether *DeT* I.1 ff is intended as a historical autobiography.

⁹ *DeT* I.6.

of God in John 1:1-14.¹⁰ The Incarnation is indispensable for our knowledge of God:¹¹ for the Son has the fulness of the Godhead (*plenitudo divinitatis*)¹² and so reveals God the Father. Further, the true Son alone knows God the Father truly.¹³ The Son's own divinity makes this knowledge of the infinite possible. This underlines the extraordinary danger Hilary sees in Arian thinking: a Son who is ultimately only a creature, albeit uniquely exalted, and therefore no 'true' son, cannot provide salvific knowledge. The soteriological considerations here resemble those found in Athanasius.

The question, though, is how there can be a true Son. Hilary's basic explanation uses exactly that feature creating the original epistemological and soteriological problem, the nature and character of God. This perfect and infinite God can only generate perfectly. The Son can therefore do what he does because he is perfect, and he is perfect because he is born from the perfect.¹⁴

This in turn means the doctrine of God the Father is foundational for Hilary. Generation certainly is a focal point for Hilary,¹⁵ as Fortman argues, from which he can repel heretical criticisms, but it can only play that role because of the nature and character of the God who generates. This nature helps determine both Hilary's theological method and the contours of his trinitarian theology. Consideration, therefore, must start with God's nature.

¹⁰ *DeT* I.10.

¹¹ D. Bertrand 1997:399.

¹² *DeT* I.113 and III.17.

¹³ Hilary Ps 53. Para 6. The Son '*...qui solus patrem vidit, qui solus patrem scit...*' Cp. C. Borchardt 1966:66.

¹⁴ *DeT* II.11; *De Synodis* (hereafter *DeS*) 22. P.Burns 1993:26 notes just this.

¹⁵ Fortman 1972:129.

6.2. The Nature and Character of God in Hilary

6.2.1. *The Infinity of God*

Both Meijering¹⁶ and J. McDermott¹⁷ stress infinity in Hilary's account of God, such that Meijering can treat God's infinity as the *Leitmotiv* gathering Hilary's various themes into a systematic unity.¹⁸

Undoubtedly infinity is central to Hilary's conception of God. It appears early in *De Trinitate* I.6, and stimulates Hilary's joy and awe in worship,¹⁹ while precluding unaided human comprehension.²⁰ Nevertheless, to say that this is the *Leitmotiv* risks over-statement, at least without an examination of how Hilary constructs his case.

6.2.2. *Hilary's construction of his doctrine of God - God's Self-*

Authorship

Two passages are extremely significant. The first is *De Trinitate* I.4-8, and the second *De Trinitate* II.6-7. Regarding the first, a slight complication is that some considerations Hilary mentions relate to his pre-conversion life and the 'knowledge' he had there. Is Hilary committing the methodological fallacy he later castigates in the Arians, covertly starting with human reason?²¹ Three considerations offset this. First, Hilary sees the insights of his pagan days confirmed but also surpassed by Scripture,²² especially Exodus 3:14. Secondly, his pre-conversion insight is essentially negative -

¹⁶ Meijering 1982:14 on infinity in *DeT* I, but more generally 1982:183f.

¹⁷ McDermott 1973:172.

¹⁸ Meijering 1982:183.

¹⁹ *DeT* I.7.

²⁰ *DeT* I.6.

²¹ See Borchardt 1966:46 on Hilary's criticisms of Arian use of reason.

²² *DeT* I.5.

a God who transcends understanding.²³ Bertrand speaks rightly of a tension in the converted Hilary between apophaticism and knowing God,²⁴ but this pre-conversion ‘knowledge’ is apophatic. Therefore, thirdly, this pre-conversion knowledge is not salvific. Saving knowledge is of God as Father, *ex hypothesi* unavailable in pure apophaticism.²⁵

De Trinitate I.4-8 does not start with God’s infinity. Rather, Hilary refers to God’s self-existence. Thus in I.4 he canvasses some pagan possibilities: that God exists, but is unconcerned with the universe; and that there are gendered divinities who procreate. The first he rejects as unworthy of God,²⁶ since God’s creation of the cosmos implies concern. The second he envisages as absurd, for sexual gender implies some lack in the power of the divine nature.²⁷ He then justifies this in a significant way:

[For] that which is self-existent cannot have left outside itself [*extra se*] anything superior to itself. Hence omnipotence and eternity are the possession of One only, for omnipotence is incapable of degrees of strength or weakness, and eternity of priority or succession. In God we must worship absolute eternity and absolute power.

This suggests Hilary’s basic concept is God’s self-existence, a relatively uncontroversial starting-point in Hilary’s setting.²⁸ From this he generates (an apt term in Hilary) several points. First, most obviously, the absence of gender in the divine being. The term translated in the NPNF series ‘without distinction of sex’ is *indifferens*, translatable more broadly as undifferentiated.²⁹ Secondly, there is God’s

²³ Harman 1973:388.

²⁴ Bertrand 1997:394.

²⁵ *DeT* I.17.

²⁶ Compare Athanasius’ arguments in *De Inc.* 6ff on what is worthy of the creator.

²⁷ Perhaps because another independent being is needed for completeness and satisfaction.

²⁸ One recalls, naturally, the Arian stress on God’s uncreated, unoriginated nature.

²⁹ G.Durand, C.Morel and G.Pelland in their French translation prefer ‘indivisible’.2001 I:211.

oneness,³⁰ a central point of debate between Hilary and the Arians³¹ and Sabellians.³²

Thirdly, there is God's omnipotence and fourthly, his eternity.

For Hilary these flow from the corollary of self-existence: [*divinum et aeternum*] *nihil necesse est extra se quod sui esset praestantius reliquisset*. It is worth pondering briefly why Hilary thinks self-existence entails that nothing more excellent or powerful exists outside (*extra*)³³ the self-existent being. It stems from Hilary's way of putting self-existence:³⁴ '*id quod sibi ad id quod esset auctor esset...*' - the divine is the author of what it is for itself. The divine defines itself completely and independently of external 'others'.

Hence, if another being existed who causes or could influence God's self-definition, this would preclude God from being fully his own author. This does not deny that God's character and nature have definite contours (goodness and so forth), but he is not dependent on something external (*extra se*) for them.³⁵ But since he is fully his own author, this does then preclude other beings more excellent than he.

This also precludes composition, for no-one can 'compose' God, who can be described as 'one' in this sense. It further implies eternity, for if the divine being once

³⁰ See Meijering 1982:29.

³¹ It has been rightly observed that differences exist between the theology of Arius and his contemporaries and the theology of signatories to the Sirmium Creed: see e.g. D. H. Williams. Yet it remains that Hilary and other pro-Nicene writers felt that 'Arian' still applied to 'Homoian' theology. He is also content to quote extensively from Arius' letter to Alexander to set out the case he wishes to answer. Nor is it clear that pro-Nicenes thought this an empty, if useful, slander. Accordingly Hilary's designations are retained here since it is his theology that falls for investigation. See Appendix 5 for later Arianism and Homoianism.

³² Hilary is well aware that Arians and Sabellians and orthodox appeal to the monotheistic text of Deut. 6:4. The debate is over what kind of monotheism.

³³ One notes the language of externality (compare Athanasius). See 6.5.3. below.

³⁴ The NPNF translation tends to compress and flatten out Hilary's thought here.

³⁵ Again, compare externality in Athanasius.

was not, then it would, presumably, be absurd to envisage self-authorship: there would be no self to be author. Hence Hilary can support an anterior eternity. Posterior eternity tends also to follow since nothing could deflect a fully self-authoring being from being what he is. Thus eternity and omnipotence are closely related outcomes of this self-authorship. That is where Hilary rests his argument in *De Trinitate* I.4. ‘In God we must worship absolute eternity and absolute power.’³⁶ Here one approaches the concept of divine monarchy, albeit not the terminology.³⁷

The priority attached to self-existence continues in the next section. Quoting Exodus 3:14,³⁸ he comments:

For no property of God which the mind can grasp is more characteristic of Him than existence, since existence, in the absolute sense, cannot be predicated of that which shall come to an end, or of that which has had a beginning.³⁹

Again anterior and posterior eternity are linked with an existence unqualified by externalities. Hilary only later develops infinity and the epistemological difficulties that arise for finite creatures trying to grasp the infinite.⁴⁰ God’s infinity does not simply refer to God’s physical unboundedness and his total presence throughout his cosmos, although Hilary upholds these,⁴¹ but can also be related to his eternity and omnipotence, founded on his full ‘self-authorship’. To that extent Meijering’s original contention⁴² is defensible only by expanding the connotations of infinity. It is, perhaps, preferable to retain Meijering’s right stress on the importance of the

³⁶ ...in Deo autem nihil nisi aeternum potensque esse venerandum.’ Again the NPNF translation is quite bold.

³⁷ Hanson 1988b:472 rightly points to considerable influences from Tertullian. This is notably present in the exegesis of John 10:30.

³⁸ *Ego sum qui sum* and *is qui est*.

esse

³⁹ *Non enim aliud proprium magis Deo quam intellexeretur, quia idipsum quod est neque desinentis est aliquando neque coepta.*

⁴⁰ *DeT* I.6.

⁴¹ *DeT* I.6. *Inest interior, excedit exterior.*

⁴² Meijering 1982:183f.

doctrine of God's nature and character as an integrating and over-arching factor, but based on God's full self-authorship.

The second major passage in *De Trinitate* to discuss the being and attributes of God, II.6-7, confirms this stress on God's 'self-existence'. He begins:

It is the Father to Whom all existence owes its origin. In Christ and through Christ He is the source of all. In contrast to all else He is self-existent. He does not draw His being from without, but possesses it from Himself and in Himself. He is infinite, for nothing contains Him and He contains all things; He is eternally unconditioned by space, for He is illimitable; eternally anterior to time, for time is His creation.⁴³

The starting-point is again God's distinctive self-existence as author of all. This self-existence again is glossed as independence from external contribution or influence.⁴⁴

This in turn suggests his self-sufficiency in terms of his self-definition.⁴⁵ This leads Hilary again to the difficulties in comprehending such an infinite God:

Let imagination range to what you may suppose is God's utmost limit, and you will find Him present there; strain as you will there is always a further horizon towards which to strain.⁴⁶

This is followed by the transcendence that God's eternity provides, with the consequence that human reason cannot comprehend God.⁴⁷

Gird up your intellect to comprehend Him as a whole; He eludes you, God, as a whole, has left something within your grasp, but this something is inextricably involved in His entirety. Thus you have missed the whole, since it is only a part which remains in your hands; nay, not even a part, for you are dealing with a whole which you have failed to divide. For a part implies division, a whole is undivided, and God is everywhere and wholly present wherever He is. Reason, therefore, cannot cope with Him, since no point of contemplation can be found outside Himself and since eternity is eternally His.

This partly re-states *De Trinitate* I.4-6, but here God's indivisibility is more prominent. Such complete self-authorship, implying omnipotence,⁴⁸ means no-one

⁴³ *DeT* II.6.

⁴⁴ ...*non aliunde quod est sumens.*

⁴⁵ ...*sed id quod est ex se adque in se obtinens.*

⁴⁶ *DeT* II.6.

could divide such a God. Yet posterior eternity, which Hilary also links with such self-authorship, also tends to preclude God dividing himself. God is then indivisible. This will provide an extremely important parameter for divine generation, as well as relating closely to divine unchangeability.⁴⁹

M. Figura and J. Doignon summarise this doctrine of God thus:

Dieu le Père est éternel, insaisissable, infini, invisible, parfait. Il est, par rapport au Fils, inengendré et innascible.⁵⁰

This rightly lists specific items, but understates the logical connections of these attributes arising from God's independent self-authorship. It is the method for coming to know this God that we now address.

6.3. Method and Coming to Know God

Hilary envisages Scripture as God's self-attestation⁵¹ and accordingly spends some time discussing its right handling. This is necessitated by the way the heretics also cite the Word of God.⁵² The debate does not centre on producing new and unexpected texts,⁵³ but rather on interpreting and handling old favourites and on synthesising them.⁵⁴ Differing interpretation was not adiaphorous. Hilary must, then, establish there is a wrong way to handle the right text.

⁴⁷ Compare Harman 1973:388.

⁴⁸ See on *DeT* I.4 above.

⁴⁹ The importance of which is rightly stressed by Meijering 1982:129.

⁵⁰ Figura and Doignon 2001:83.

⁵¹ E.g. *DeT* IV.14.

⁵² Borchardt 1966:48, Meijering 1982:68f.

⁵³ When *DeT* was composed the Arian controversy was about 35 years old. No doubt there were few textual 'surprises' by then.

⁵⁴ In particular Hilary accepts Deut 6:4 as a point of departure. His point is that the Arians and Sabellians are wrong about the monotheism it proposes. See *DeT* IV.15 where he comments of the heretics' citation of Deut 6:4 '...is this a truth which anyone has ever dared to doubt?'

6.3.1. Coming to Know God Wrongly

Borchardt rightly sets out four factors that Hilary considers contribute to the heretics' wrong handling of scripture.⁵⁵ Hilary's starting point is that the biblical text is not intrinsically defective: 'the crime comes from the construction not the word'.⁵⁶

First, and perhaps most importantly, Hilary deplores how heretics bring their own preconceptions to the text. They interpret according to their own wish.⁵⁷ His example is how the words 'Father', 'Son' and 'Holy Spirit' are evacuated of their proper meaning. Presumably he has in mind the preconception that God simply cannot be a 'real' Father.

For Hilary, the doctrine of God suggests this is defective. Since God surpasses human comprehension, one simply cannot approach him with preconceptions:

...[We] eschew all blasphemous and reckless assertions concerning God and cleave to the very letter of revelation.⁵⁸

Instead, God must, in Hilary's celebrated terms, be the witness to himself. We either know him as he chooses or not at all.⁵⁹ Paradoxically, Arianism, so often associated with asserting God's transcendence, is accused of failing to respect just that in its theological method.

Borchardt's second factor is that Arians quote texts in isolation.⁶⁰ This fragments God's witness, and constitutes a 'stringing together of isolated phrases'.⁶¹ Instead one phrase should be interpreted by another, and so on, giving a contextual

⁵⁵ Borchardt 1966:49.

⁵⁶ '...et sensus, non sermo fit crimen.' *DeT* II.3.

⁵⁷ *DeT* II.3. . *pro voluntatis suae sensu, non pro veritatis ipsius absolutione.*

⁵⁸ *DeT* IV.14.

⁵⁹ *DeT* I.18.

⁶⁰ *DeT* IV.14.

⁶¹ *DeT* IV.14.

analysis tending to maximise coherence. Coherence and consistency in his self-disclosure are, of course, to be expected from the single, omnipotent and eternal God Hilary has earlier outlined. His own perfect singularity might well suggest a similar singularity in the sum of his self-disclosures.

This does not necessarily mean that the heretics' case will be incoherent. The coherence will, though, be the reader's. The *catena* of isolated texts referred to in *De Trinitate* IV.14 will be the result of wanting particular answers. Hilary suggests that desire forestalls reason,⁶² and that in practice 'we set up our desires as doctrines', rather than letting 'our doctrine dictate our desires'.⁶³ This results in using Scripture to discover what one fancies, not what one ought to learn.⁶⁴ Hilary sees this as fulfilling the description of 2 Timothy 4:3f.⁶⁵

This raises some interesting features. First, concerning reason. Later Arianism especially has sometimes been associated with a kind of rationalism: it is inconceivable to the human mind that God could generate a Son, so he did not, putting the argument very crudely. Hilary's point is that in fact heretics (in which he would certainly include Arianism) subtly prefer desire to reason.

Secondly, if we consult the Bible only to confirm existing desires, this precludes our learning anything new. The Bible would cease to function as revelation from another person of himself, which is disastrous when the revealer is an infinite God encountering finite minds.

⁶² *DeT* X.1.

⁶³ *DeT* X.1.

⁶⁴ *DeT* X.2.

⁶⁵ *DeT* X.3.

Thirdly, Hilary observes that appealing to the Bible becomes a mere veneer of truth and piety.⁶⁶ We appear to listen to God's self-disclosure, but the authority of divine revelation merely cloaks what in reality are our desires.

This relates to Borchardt's fourth point, that humans declare war on the Word of God.⁶⁷ Hilary contends that humans would, if they could, 'pluck God from his throne', but, being unable to do so physically, we display this in our treatment of God's words. Here, one has moved from preconception, or the arbitrariness of isolated texts, or from the preference of one's desire, to a fundamentally malign motivation. Hilary has a well-developed 'hermeneutics of suspicion' directed against the heretics.

In the background are the principles that God must be his own witness,⁶⁸ a necessity born of his infinite character, and that we must recognise this in faith,⁶⁹ rather than rebelliousness.⁷⁰ This is very suggestive for considering the right way of coming to know God through his Scripture.

6.3.2. Coming to Know God Rightly

Naturally Hilary advocates approaching Scripture without preconceptions.⁷¹ To a modern reader this sounds like yearning for pre-suppositionless hermeneutics. He was certainly acutely aware of the heretics' deep-rooted biases,⁷² but doubtless was

⁶⁶ *DeT* X.2.

⁶⁷ *DeT* III.21.

⁶⁸ E.g. *DeT* I.18.

⁶⁹ Cf. Borchardt 1966:51f.

⁷⁰ *DeT* III.1.

⁷¹ *DeT* I.18.

⁷² See above on *DeT* III.21.

less aware how difficult it is to shed, or even spot, these presuppositions. Has he fully realised the orthodox too have presuppositions?

However, this risks unfairness, and not just in applying anachronistic standards of hermeneutics. *De Trinitate* I.18 asks not so much for presuppositionless exegesis, but rather for exegesis with correct presuppositions. Hilary has two in view. One is that we start from the perspective that we are dealing with God and must adjust our thoughts accordingly, remembering we are ‘judging as of infinity’.⁷³ Thus his method reflects his overarching doctrine of God.⁷⁴ God is his own best witness and we must use the forms of speech about himself that he has given.⁷⁵

The second presupposition is a much more general rule:

For he is the best student who does not read his thoughts into the book, but lets it reveal its own; who draws from it its sense, and does not import his own into it, nor force upon its words a meaning he had determined was the right one before he opened its pages.⁷⁶

This rule maximises the integrity of the text’s own meaning. It stands sharply opposed to some modern thoughts that the reader is the author, either as something that is inevitable, or as something that is ethically desirable. Assuming the text conveys the author’s meaning, Hilary’s rule is strongly personalist, allowing and respecting the meaning of another to be recognised, rather than suppressed.

Interestingly, both rules can broaden, not restrict, interpretation. One does not reject a meaning because one thinks it simply impossible (the finite must be wary of judging the infinite) or contrary to one’s own desires (one is looking for the thoughts

⁷³ *DeT* I.18.

⁷⁴ In support of Meijering’s contention 1982:183, with the qualifications mentioned above about the wider associations of ‘infinity.’

⁷⁵ Harman 1973:390.

of the other, not one's own). This is perfectly intelligible given Hilary's need to ensure divine generation is not ruled out *a priori*.

In contrast to the heretics, Hilary undertakes not to de-contextualise scriptural texts.⁷⁷ For words 'must be explained by circumstances, not circumstances forced into conformity with words'.⁷⁸ This prompts three observations. First, Hilary does indeed try to deal at crucial points with the circumstances when particular words are spoken. A good example is his handling of John 5:17-19, where he stresses that verse 17 must be related to the Sabbath breach earlier in the chapter, and verse 19 to the enmity of the Jews mentioned in verse 18.⁷⁹ Of course, he does not do this every time he mentions a text for he returns repeatedly to the same texts.

Secondly, Hilary provides in *De Trinitate* IV.15ff an example of a broader kind of context. Taking the seminal text of Deuteronomy 6:4 he analyses how that verse must be construed given what Moses says elsewhere (notably the plural forms in the creation account).⁸⁰ From this he concludes that the 'Mosaic' books themselves are against the heretics' interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:4.⁸¹

From there Hilary moves to the still broader context of other Old Testament corpora, notably Psalm 44:8⁸² and Isaiah 45:11-16.⁸³ The order is suggestive: Hilary deals with the closer context first (the 'Mosaic' literature), before moving wider. To

⁷⁶ *DeT* I.18.

⁷⁷ *DeT* IV.14.

⁷⁸ *DeT* IV.14 '...quia non sermoni res sed rei est sermo subiectus.'

⁷⁹ *DeT* VII.17.

⁸⁰ From *DeT* IV.16.

⁸¹ *DeT* IV.34.

⁸² *DeT* IV.35.

⁸³ *DeT* IV.38-41. Isaiah 45:11-16 is significant for Hilary given its role here and in *DeT* V.38.

that extent his contextual work ultimately relates to the canon, but this is evidently somewhat nuanced.

Such a canonical context suggests, thirdly, the need to synthesise different texts.⁸⁴ An example is *De Trinitate* II.10 where John 14:28, 10:30, 14:8ff and John 1:18 are brought together. These are very much the usual references of pro-Nicene theologians, but, as will be described below, Hilary welds them together to make a coherent case. These attempts to provide context, both immediate and canonical, tend to mitigate the charge that Hilary, just like the heretics, merely has his own *catena* of isolated texts.

It naturally follows from these remarks on context that words should bear their contextual meaning. This is particularly sensitive for Hilary. He observes that we are baptised as Christians into the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁸⁵ This is the God we know. However, the heretics, he observes, empty this baptismal formula of meaning.⁸⁶ This means we are baptised in a name which does not reflect the truth about God. For a race whose felicity lies in knowing God,⁸⁷ this is salvifically disastrous. Hence a primary, specific concern that two particular words, Father and Son, be given their proper meaning lies behind Hilary's insistence that we find the true purport of scriptural words.⁸⁸ He writes: 'we must emphasise the truth which those Names convey.'⁸⁹

⁸⁴ M. Buttell 1933:13 comments on Hilary's skill at synthesis.

⁸⁵ *DeT* II.1.

⁸⁶ *DeT* II.5.

⁸⁷ *DeT* I.3, 9, 10.

⁸⁸ E.g. *DeT* IV.14.

⁸⁹ *DeT* II.5. ...*nos naturam nominum proferamus*.

He understands that this involves using human language and is not entirely straightforward:

We are well aware that neither the speech of men nor the analogy of human nature can give us a full insight into the things of God.⁹⁰

He concedes that human speech characteristically deals with matters within our compass, the finite things within our world. Nevertheless, this is offset by his conviction that in Scripture we have words God chose for his self-attestation:

We must make our choice between rejecting his witness, as the heathen do, or else believing in Him as He is, and this in the only possible way, by thinking of Him in the aspect in which He presents Himself to us.⁹¹

Hilary requires, then, a revealed theology. This is intimately related to his views of the transcendent, eternal and infinite God. His approach to Scripture reflects this, for he sees the Son revealing the truth about God, that he is Father-of-the-Son.⁹² this is the ‘name’ of the God who sent Jesus.

Subsequent questions doubtless would be concerned more with the possibility of revelation than with its need. The next question, therefore, is how such a God can reveal the truth about himself. This takes us to Hilary’s *magnum opus*, the *De Trinitate*.

⁹⁰ *DeT* IV.2.

6.4. The *De Trinitate*: Questions of Structure

6.4.1 *The Movement of Argument*

Some perceive a difference between Books I-III and IV-XII of *De Trinitate*.⁹³

Books I-III have been described, with some justice, as a positive presentation of the baptismal faith,⁹⁴ while IV-XII refute Arian christology and provide a polemical explanation of orthodoxy against the texts the Arians used.⁹⁵

Books I-III, however, do more than just present the baptismal faith of Matthew 28:19. Undoubtedly this is at the heart of Book II,⁹⁶ but Hilary has carefully framed the significance of the baptismal faith. His ‘autobiography’⁹⁷ has indicated both the character and nature of the God of this faith and the importance of knowing him. Moreover, Book III develops the theme of the Father in the Son and the Son in the Father,⁹⁸ thereby linking the baptismal formula with the circumincession of Father and Son.⁹⁹ This implies that the reality of the baptismal words may be underpinned by this circumincession. John 14:11 and 10:38 therefore emerge as critical texts for Hilary.

This positively presents the faith rather than purely refuting error, and demonstrates, as Meijering saw, Hilary’s positive skills as a systematician who was not merely driven by his opponents’ agenda.¹⁰⁰ This does not mean that Books I-III are polemic-free zones. Thus, I.15-18 outlines heresies opposed to the faith Hilary wishes

⁹¹ *DeT* IV.14.

⁹² *DeT* III.17 on John 17:6.

⁹³ E.g. Figura and Doignon 2001:54 and S. Galtier 1960:36. For considerations about structure and title of *DeT*, see Appendix 4.

⁹⁴ Figura and Doignon 2001:54. Note the prominence of Mt. 28:19.

⁹⁵ Figura and Doignon *ibid*.

⁹⁶ Introduced as its dominant theme in II.1.

⁹⁷ The historicity of this is difficult to assess. While not intrinsically impossible, it certainly contains stylised features.

⁹⁸ III.1 states this, so to speak, as the topic.

⁹⁹ Not Hilary’s term, but used here for convenience.

to express (I.19) and heretical understandings are attacked as evacuating the baptismal formula of meaning.¹⁰¹ The context of Book I makes this enormously serious, since it suggests that heretical christology means that claims to know God are empty.¹⁰² The judgement that Books IV-XII are polemical¹⁰³ is perhaps best seen as a matter of degree.

Books I-III, anyway, do not readily constitute a ‘stand-alone’ composition. Hilary’s acknowledgement that heretics have their own texts (albeit twisted from their true intention)¹⁰⁴ means he must deal with those texts, which is implicitly recognised in Book I as Hilary describes his lengthy plan for dealing with the problem.

For Figura and Doignon, Books IV-XII also divide into two parts.¹⁰⁵ The first part comprises Books IV-VI, which deal with Arius’ letter to Alexander.¹⁰⁶ Here a particularly important contention is that the Old Testament supports orthodox readings of Deuteronomy 6:4, and that the Son has true divinity (notably book V).

The second block comprises Books VII-XII, characterised by Figura and Doignon as a series of ripostes to Arian counter-arguments.¹⁰⁷ Hilary himself draws attention to the importance of Book VII.¹⁰⁸ There he explores the orthodox unity of nature of Father and Son. The importance he attaches to the issue is intelligible given that here above all he must tread between Sabellian evaporation of personal

¹⁰⁰ Meijering 1982:183f.

¹⁰¹ *DeT* II.5.

¹⁰² Arians and Sabellians alike end up denying the Son’s divine generation.

¹⁰³ Galtier 1960:36.

¹⁰⁴ *DeT* II.3.

¹⁰⁵ Figura and Doignon 2001:55.

¹⁰⁶ The consistent reference to Arius’ work is explicable on the grounds that Arius is the *fons et origo* of the heresy.

¹⁰⁷ Figura and Diognon 2001:55.

distinction, and Arian assertions of personal distinction rendering Father and Son ‘unlike’, or ‘not like *in all respects*’.¹⁰⁹

In the course of this block, Hilary meets the arguments that the unity is merely of will (Book VIII), that the Son himself acknowledges inferiority (Book IX, especially important texts being John 5:19 and 14:28), and that the Son cannot be true God because of his sufferings (Book X¹¹⁰). Only in Book XII do we finally encounter the Arian flagship, Proverbs 8:22. By then, Hilary’s argument has both isolated the Arian interpretation of Proverbs 8:22, and also lined up statements of Jesus supporting the orthodox view, so that the Arian interpretation is an evidently dissonant reading. Quintilian has been suggested as an influence on Hilary.¹¹¹ It is perhaps not over-cynical to see the overall structure of *De Trinitate* as accomplished rhetoric, one of whose objects is to render the Arian view of Proverbs 8:22 solitary and implausible even before it is discussed.

6.4.2. The Purpose of De Trinitate

While Books I-III can be characterised as positive, even within them the work’s controversial setting is clear. Hilary brackets Sabellian and Arian heresies together,¹¹² commenting ‘My soul has been burning to answer these insane attacks.’¹¹³ This suggests both that the work’s fundamental purposes include polemic and also something about the centre of controversy. For it is not immediately obvious why

¹⁰⁸ *DeT* VII.1.

¹⁰⁹ The emphasised phrase helps demarcate the difference between innocent and guilty uses of *homoiousios*.

¹¹⁰ It has been felt (very strongly by e.g. Hanson 1988b:500f) that this is one of the less satisfactory areas of Hilary’s christology. As stated above, the issue is the ‘reality’ of Christ’s sufferings. The logic, though, of Hilary’s soteriology seems at places (e.g. Ps 53.para 13) that the Son must really die.

¹¹¹ Discussed by Buttell 1933:15ff, and Meijering 1982:5, as a result of Jerome’s comments.

¹¹² *DeT* I.16.

¹¹³ *DeT* I.17.

Arians and Sabellians should be thus lumped together. Arians, after all, had enjoyed certain advantages in the controversy precisely because they could not be accused of Sabellianism.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the Nicene *homoousion* was partly attacked just because of its ‘Sabellian’ associations with Paul of Samosata.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Sabellianism was at least not ontologically subordinationist as Arianism was.

However, both deny that the Father is really Father and the Son really Son.¹¹⁶ Sabellians do so claiming that the Father is the Son,¹¹⁷ while Arians do so by taking the sonship as adoptive only, but the net result is identical. Claiming to be loyal to God’s unity, they both deny generation, and ‘... isolate a solitary God at the heart of the faith’.¹¹⁸ The alternative, both argue, is two gods.

This, then, helps define the area within which Hilary must establish his case:

But we, divinely taught to confess neither two Gods nor yet a solitary God, will adduce the evidence of the Gospels and the prophets for our confession of God the Father and God the Son, united, not confounded, in our faith. We will not admit Their identity nor allow, as a compromise, that Christ is God in some imperfect sense; for God, born of God, cannot be the same as His Father, since He is His Son, nor yet can He be different in nature¹¹⁹.

Hilary consistently maintains this emphasis, that he proclaims neither a solitary God, nor two gods.¹²⁰ If God is solitary, of course, then the baptismal faith is illusory and we do not know him, for ‘Father’, ‘Son’ and ‘Holy Spirit’ do not disclose the solitary

¹¹⁴ A Son who is a creature clearly is not ‘the same’ as the Creator.

¹¹⁵ Compare Athanasius’s efforts in this regard to distance *homoousios* from Samosatene taints. Note also Hilary’s acknowledgement of such difficulties in *DeT* IV.3ff.

¹¹⁶ Galtier 1960:82 makes this point about the Arians.

¹¹⁷ Compare Tertullian on this.

¹¹⁸ *DeT* I.16 and 17.

¹¹⁹ *DeT* I.17.

¹²⁰ Hanson 1988b:484 rightly observes that the idea God is neither solitary nor diverse is Hilary’s ‘watchword’.

reality. For Hilary, saving faith is in God the true Father and Jesus the true Son.¹²¹

Denying divine generation damages salvation.¹²²

Therefore Arian and Sabellian theologies present a common target to Hilary, in their common belief that divine unity precludes generation. This leads back to the divine nature with which this unity is associated.

6.5. Generation and the Divine Nature -‘Of’ and ‘In’ Terminology

C. Kaiser illuminatingly proposes that Hilary largely interprets relations between Father and Son from two sets of distinctive johannine usages, the ‘of’ and ‘in’ terminologies.¹²³ He rightly stresses that these usages are prominent, and they will be adopted as a framework for discussion, although supplemented in due course.

6.5.1. *Whose Son? – the Significance of ‘Of’ terms*

The heart of Hilary’s case can be expressed shortly. The Son is who and what he is by virtue of his generation. He is born of God, of/from the substance of the Father.¹²⁴ This precludes being made of/from nothing or from any other substance than the Father, whether or not that alternative substance eternally pre-existed.¹²⁵ Here, of course, Hilary adheres both to the positive statement of the original Nicene Creed (‘of the substance of the Father’) combined with its anathema section: those who say

... that there was a time when the Son of God was not or that before he was begotten he was not, or that he was made of things that were not, or that he is of a different substance or essence [sc. from the Father] or that he is a creature, or

¹²¹ *DeTI* 17.

¹²² Cp. D.H.Williams 2001:171.

¹²³ Kaiser 1976:240.

¹²⁴ *DeS* 88. See too *DeS* 79, 84.

¹²⁵ *DeT* III.3.

subject to change or conversion — all that so say, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.

This stress on ‘of-ness’ means the Son must be considered in terms of his derivation. If the Son is ‘of’ the Father, ultimately attention focuses on the Father: one looks at the Father’s nature to discern the Son’s. So, what is the Father like? Hilary raises the matter thus:¹²⁶

Est Filius ab eo Patre qui est, unigenitus ab ingenito, progenies a parente, vivus a vivo. Ut Patri vita in semetipso, ita et Filio data est vita in semetipso. Perfectus a perfecto, quia totus a toto.

This is enormously enlightening. In the first sentence Hilary accumulates a series of *a/ab* clauses, the first of which qualifies the Father who generates as ‘He who is’. This echoes Hilary’s earlier remarks on the self-authoring God¹²⁷ whose absolute existence is affirmed in Exodus 3:14¹²⁸ in terms, *inter alia*, of ‘*is qui est*’. Hilary starts by recalling key thoughts about God’s nature. Generation must be considered in that context.

The Father is, of course, above all, alive, *vivus* (in the absolute sense of existing). This concept forms the hook for the next sentence, which describes the Father’s life as ‘*vita in semetipso*’. This language of internality paraphrases Hilary’s earlier thought that the Father depends on nothing external for his existence.¹²⁹ Hilary can now combine his reflections on the Father’s ‘*vita*’ with the eternally generated ‘*vita*’ of the Son. Here the echo is with John 5:26¹³⁰ and the ‘given’ life of the Son.¹³¹

¹²⁶ *DeT* II.11.

¹²⁷ *DeT* I.4.

¹²⁸ Quoted *DeT* I.5.

¹²⁹ *DeT* I.4-6.

¹³⁰ John 5 is a frequent port of call for Hilary.

¹³¹ The Vulgate reads ‘*sicut enim Pater habet vitam in semet ipso sic dedit et Filio vitam habere in semet ipso*’, although of course Hilary would not have used this translation. The similarity of phrasing is nevertheless striking.

Both have this special kind of life '*in semetipso*', and such life, derived from nothing external, characterises divine being.¹³² In effect Hilary combines Exodus 3:14 with John 5:26, glossing the absolute '*qui est*' with '*vita in semetipso*'.

Several reflections arise. First, Hilary has indeed preserved the 'giving' language of John 5:26.¹³³ He has, however, phrased this passively, comparatively de-emphasising the Father's giving. Certainly little is made here of the Father's giving and the personal relational aspects that implies. Hilary stresses the quality of the life rather than the fact it is given. Nevertheless, although the Son's life is *vita in semetipso*, it is derived: derivation is at the heart of the Father-Son relation.

Secondly, is this blending of Exodus 3:14 and John 5:26 legitimate? Brown argues that 'life' in John 5:26 is 'a creative life-giving power exercised towards men' and that the trinitarian life is not in view.¹³⁴ However, this seems unsatisfactory. The context is a controversy over blasphemy and rebellion against God (5:18). Jesus is faced with charges that his reference to his 'Father' means he is establishing himself alongside God. It is, then, exactly his relation to his Father that is at stake, that is, the 'trinitarian relations'. Further, the Father-Son relationship is in focus in 5:19 and 5:30.¹³⁵ Thus the surrounding context of this discussion of the Son's life is trinitarian.¹³⁶

¹³² Ridderbos 1997:199 comments that Jesus like God 'has life in himself'.

¹³³ The significance of 'giving' language in the Gospel will be dealt with in chapter 8 below.

¹³⁴ Brown 1971 I:214.

¹³⁵ The theme of Jesus not acting 'independently' of his Father in 5:19 and 5:30 forms an inclusion, bracketing the intervening material.

¹³⁶ In Brown's own discussion the issue is further complicated by his view that vv. 19-25 and vv. 26-30 represent different stages of the johannine tradition: Brown 1971 I:219.

Brown's approach also risks falsely dichotomising between 'God's-own-life' and 'God's-overflowing-creative-life-to-others'. Yet within the chapter 5 controversy, what Jesus can do is intimately connected with who he is. Giving life to the dead in a general resurrection (5:28f) seems to require divine power and is certainly associated with God in Daniel 12:1ff. This suggests that, unless Jesus has 'divine life', he cannot fulfil his claim in 5:27ff to grant life. It is uncontroversial that God's life is not a created life. Hence, the interpretation that sees here the Father granting an 'uncreated' (but begotten) 'life' to the Son recognises what Jesus' claims imply.

Hilary goes on in *De Trinitate* II.11 to say that the Son is perfect as from a perfect being (*perfectus a perfecto*). The implication is that a perfect being must necessarily generate perfectly.¹³⁷ P. Burns rightly stresses the significance of a perfect birth.¹³⁸ This means that the Son shares the Father's perfections, which in Hilary's terms cluster around infinity, eternity and omnipotence.¹³⁹ For Hilary, the Son holds these not in part, but fully (*totus a toto*), since otherwise the generation would be imperfect. It should be stressed in this connection that Hilary envisages all that the Father is being given to the Son, on the basis of John 16:15. For Galtier this is significant.¹⁴⁰ Hilary dwells on the text:

He says, All things are delivered Me of My Father.... All things are delivered unto Him; from this All there is no exception. If They possess an equal might; if They share an equal mutual knowledge, hidden from us; if these names of Father and Son express the relation between Them, then, I demand, are They not in truth what They are in name, wielders of the same omnipotence, shrouded in the same impenetrable mystery? God does not speak in order to deceive.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Compare *DeS* 22.

¹³⁸ Burns 1993:26. Compare also the emphasis of Borchardt 1966:79 that 'origin' is decisive.

¹³⁹ See the earlier discussion on *DeT* I.4-6 and II.6 & 7.

¹⁴⁰ Galtier 1960:97.

¹⁴¹ *DeT* VI.26.

Here Hilary uses John 16:15 to support the contention that the Son really is a Son and has full divine powers, which he links in the following chapter with the ‘works’ that his Father has given him to do as witnesses.¹⁴² Again, derivation ideas are important. In short, the Father’s perfect nature entails a perfect generation, in which the Son has the Father’s properties,¹⁴³ and, having those properties in their entirety, he must be fully God.¹⁴⁴

However, with Hilary, the Father’s nature also repels heretical understandings and attacks. Clearly Arianism with its doctrine of ontological subordination cannot be correct. After all, the perfect Father begets a Son according to his own eternal and uncreated nature. Generation also opposes Sabellians because generation presupposes two.

Yet why does this not constitute ditheism (the original charge Hilary mentions that the Arians and Sabellians brought)?¹⁴⁵ Ditheism could arise if generation involved emanation or some other severance. Such a theory would be disastrous on at least four counts. First, if the severance were not eternal, this would violate unchangeability and indivisibility. Secondly, if the severance were eternal, that would simply amount to two gods. Thirdly, if severance amounted to apportioning the divine substance, the Son would not appear to have ‘all’ one needs to be divine, but only part. Fourthly, would this not also mean God the Father ceased to be fully God if ‘part’ of him were apportioned to the Son?

¹⁴² From John 5:36f.

¹⁴³ E.g. *DeT* III.4.

¹⁴⁴ *DeT* V.37.

¹⁴⁵ *DeT* I.17.

Hilary in fact is emphatic that generation rules out not merely a solitary God (whether in Arian or Sabellian forms), but also ditheism.¹⁴⁶ Here Hilary actually adopts part of the Arian/Sabellian case. He is not disturbed by God's eternal indivisibility. Rather his point is that generation *from God* must rule out any partition.¹⁴⁷ Since God is unchanging, there can be no diminution through generation.¹⁴⁸ God, being God, could only generate by giving in his entirety, yet without losing what he is and has. Given that he generates, it must be this way. Versions of generation that somehow involve change in God are ruled out by Hilary's strong doctrine of a self-authoring God and its corollaries. Therefore, he repeatedly states, the Arian/Sabellian criticism that generation collapses into ditheism, fails.

The obvious response is that this might hold if the first step is satisfied, 'given that he generates'. To support that proposition, one might turn to the 'of' terminology. This, though, is less straightforward than might appear. For it might be argued that 'son of' terms in John's Gospel do not necessarily entail being begotten rather than made, let alone eternally begotten.¹⁴⁹ For instance, the term 'children of God' (John 1:12) refers to a relationship with a beginning, for people become children.¹⁵⁰

However, 'of' language does not necessarily betoken merely being created or deriving one's existence from some-one or something. For in John 8:23 the Jews are told by Jesus that they are 'of this world'. This cannot mean the world 'creates' them since John 1:1-4 has already declared that all exists through the work of the Word.

¹⁴⁶ *DeT* VII.2

¹⁴⁷ *DeT* II.8, *DeS* 61 on no separation.

¹⁴⁸ *DeT* II.22.

¹⁴⁹ A point which the Arians rightly made.

John 8:44 shows rather that ‘son of’ language can denote obedience and shared values:¹⁵¹ Jesus’ Jewish interlocutors choose to do the desires of their ‘father’, namely Satan.¹⁵² It is also evident that in John 8 Jesus stresses his own obedience to the Father’s will.¹⁵³ The obvious question is whether Jesus’ ‘son of’ relationship precisely parallels that of the Jews towards Satan, something ethical, rather than ontological.

Here Hilary takes up the question whether the Son is true God or not,¹⁵⁴ which he proposes to answer as follows:¹⁵⁵

It is clear that the truth, or genuineness, of a thing is a question of its nature and its powers. For instance, true wheat is that which grows to a head with the beard bristling round it, which is purged from the chaff and ground to flour, compounded into a loaf and taken for food, and renders the nature and the uses of bread. Thus natural powers are the evidence of truth; and let us see, by this test, whether He, Whom Moses calls God,¹⁵⁶ be true God.

In other words, does the Son do the works God does? If he does, that implies that while he may be an ethical ‘son of’ God, he must also be something more. Hilary points out that in creation God the Son creates from nothing at the Father’s behest.¹⁵⁷ Does the Arian hypothesis that the Son is created and that he is the intermediary for creation fit this? While Athanasius argued that this hypothesis involved infinite regress, Hilary develops a different point, asking in effect, could a creature create

¹⁵⁰ John 1:13 tends to confirm this difficulty: see L. Keck 1996:275.

¹⁵¹ Cf Keck 1996:280, 282.

¹⁵² Space precludes detailed engagement with the charge that John is anti-Semitic. Much depends on how ‘anti-semitism’ is defined. Here it is the ‘worldliness’, not the ethnic Jewishness, of ‘the Jews’ that largely excites John’s criticism. Obviously some would see just this as anti-semitic on the grounds that it blurs distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but this is a different anti-semitism from that which depicts ethnic Jews as separate from, and thus inferior to, Gentiles. John 8:23 (‘you are of this world’) supports the contention of A. Lincoln 2000:19 that the corporate character ‘the Jews’ represent ‘the world’ in John’s Gospel.

¹⁵³ John 8:26, 28 (in terms of speech and teaching) and 42 (in terms of coming in obedience to the Father’s sending).

¹⁵⁴ *DeTV.3.*

¹⁵⁵ *DeTV.3.*

¹⁵⁶ Hilary here builds on his earlier interpretation of the OT angelophanies and theophanies as manifestations of the Son.

from nothing? In the background, it seems, is the position that only God can create from nothing.

Hilary argues as he contemplates the Son creating at the Father's command:

How then is He not true God, Who creates, if He is true God, Who commands? If the word spoken was truly Divine, the deed done was truly Divine also. God spoke, and God created; if it was true God Who spoke, He Who created was true God also; ... Thus in the Son of God we behold the true Divine nature. He is God, He is Creator, He is Son of God, He is omnipotent...He, by Whom all things were made, is God. So much the creation of the world tells me about Him. He is God, equal with God in name; true God, equal with true God in power... And now again I ask by what authority you deny, in your confession of Father and Son, the true Divine nature of Him Whose name reveals His power, Whose power proves His right to the Name.¹⁵⁸

Characteristically Hilary uses the opportunity both to infer divinity from the power and to link it to the 'name', showing that 'God' is not merely titular but applied to the Son as reality. The soteriological consequence is obvious:¹⁵⁹ the 'name' into which we are baptised refers to the reality of God.

It is, though, notably in Book VII that Hilary produces more sustained exegetical argument along the lines that works prove identity. As already mentioned, Hilary saw Book VII as pivotal.¹⁶⁰ He claims that he has demonstrated earlier that there is a true birth. Now he must turn to the proposition that the Son is 'in the truth of his nature God'.¹⁶¹ He outlines his intention to do this from the name, birth, nature, power and assurances of Jesus himself.¹⁶² In fact, the birth attracts Hilary's emphasis. He observes that birth tends anyway to encompass those other categories.¹⁶³ In the

¹⁵⁷ *DeT* V.4 and 5.

¹⁵⁸ *DeT* V.5.

¹⁵⁹ Note the start of *DeT* II.1.

¹⁶⁰ *DeT* VII.1.

¹⁶¹ *DeT* VII.8.

¹⁶² *DeT* VII.9.

¹⁶³ *DeT* VII.16.

centre of his discussion of birth is John 5:18-30,¹⁶⁴ which indicates a priority for this passage in Hilary. Since John 5 is critical in the Gospel's discussion of right and wrong views of Jesus, this is well-taken.

Commenting on John 5:19ff, Hilary says:

Thus He, Whose nature has power to do all the same things as the Father, is included in the same nature with the Father... Two truths are combined in one proposition; that His works are done likewise proves His birth; that they are the same works proves His nature.¹⁶⁵

Hilary returns to the idea of the same works showing the same nature later,¹⁶⁶ and it is from the perspective of the nature disclosed by the works that he moves to discuss John 10:27-38.¹⁶⁷

John 5:19ff is a judicious choice for showing that the Son has divine powers. It both refers to the divine powers of giving life and exercising judgement, and compares these to the Father's powers, placing them in the context of sonship. Eventually he must answer the Arian interpretation that John 5:19 actually shows, the Son's ontological inferiority. Hilary will deal with this later.¹⁶⁸

One further feature of interest should be drawn from Hilary's handling of John 5:19ff. Hilary starts to suggest that the Son is doing not merely works similar to the Father's, works of the same magnitude, but the same works. Taking up the phrase *Omnia enim quaecumque facit Pater, eadem et Filius facit similiter*, he comments: *In*

¹⁶⁴ *DeT* VII.15-21.

¹⁶⁵ *DeT* VII.18.

¹⁶⁶ *DeT* VII. 21.

¹⁶⁷ *DeT* VII.22-32.

¹⁶⁸ *In DeT* IX.43ff.

*his enim quae et quaecumque et eadem sunt, nec diversitas potest esse nec reliquum.*¹⁶⁹ This indicates identity between the works of Father and Son.

This is understandable within Hilary's framework. There is one undivided nature and power at work and the Son works with his Father's power.¹⁷⁰ This is inevitably so since all the Son is and has is 'of' the Father.¹⁷¹ However, the Father is not severed from his nature while the Son works. Hence, says Hilary, the Father is in the Son doing the works the Son does.¹⁷² Thus, Hilary's account of the Son working in his Father's single power and nature anticipates Augustine's distinctive theme, inseparable operation.¹⁷³

To summarise, Hilary has used derivation language extensively, the 'of' language suggested by John in particular. To be the son of a father is to be born of that father's substance - to share his nature. Thus a father with a divine nature will generate a son with that nature, and a divine father who generates will do so without losing his divinity, for the divine nature is indivisible. Since that nature is unchangeable, it follows that the generation is eternal. God's eternal nature requires that there be no time when he was not Father.¹⁷⁴ Further, since the divine nature is indivisible, the Son generated 'of' such a nature will be inseparable from his Father. Such a generation is confirmed when the putative Son does his Father's works.

¹⁶⁹ *DeT* VII.18.

¹⁷⁰ *DeT* VII.17 '.. *unigenitus Deus paternae virtutis operationibus operaretur...*'

¹⁷¹ *De T* VI.26.

¹⁷² *DeT* VII.17 '*...significans tamen hoc quod ipse ageret Patris esse opus intellegendum, quia ipse in se operaretur operante.* Taking the second *ipse* as having the Father as its subject, following the NPNF translation and Durand, Morel and Pelland 2001.

Hilary's own summary puts it thus:

The nature with which God is born is necessarily the same as that of His Source. He cannot come into existence as other than God, since His origin is from none other than God.... Hence, in the generation of the Son, the incorporeal and unchangeable God begets, in accordance with His own nature, God incorporeal and unchangeable; and this perfect birth of incorporeal and unchangeable God from incorporeal and unchangeable God involves, as we see in the light of the revelation of God from God, no diminution of the Begetter's substance.¹⁷⁵

6.5.2. The Father and Son are One: the Significance of 'In'

Derivation language does not exhaust Hilary's discussion of divine generation. We turn to Kaiser's second category,¹⁷⁶ the 'in' terminology, denoting 'indwelling' and strongly linked to circumincession. Three issues arise: the place of the 'in' language, its relation to the 'of/from' language, and its relation to circumincession.

The importance of the language of Father and Son being 'in' each other is evident from the place it occupies in Books I-III. In Book II it buttresses the thought that the baptismal formula deals with names referring to the realities of the one God.¹⁷⁷ In Book III, 'I in the Father and the Father in me' introduces the Book itself.¹⁷⁸ In both instances, the terminology occurs at structurally important points as Hilary sets out his own thought most positively. The 'in' language seems more than polemical.

Hilary points out what the considerable difficulties with the terminology are:

It seems impossible that one object should be both within and without another, or that (since it is laid down that the Beings of whom we are treating, though they do not dwell apart, retain their separate existence and condition) these

¹⁷³ *DeT* VII returns to inseparable operation at 21 and 36.

¹⁷⁴ *DeT* XII.21.

¹⁷⁵ *DeT* V.37.

¹⁷⁶ Kaiser 1976:240.

¹⁷⁷ The baptismal formula is introduced in II.1 while John 14:10f is cited in II.8.

¹⁷⁸ *DeT* III.1.

Beings can reciprocally contain One Another, so that One should permanently envelope, and also be permanently enveloped by, the Other, whom yet He envelopes.¹⁷⁹

This formulation revealingly indicates several elements in Hilary's understanding of 'in' terminology. It deals with a relationship of beings who are:

- not isolated¹⁸⁰ (*non solitaria*)
- discrete
- reciprocal (*invicem*)
- permanent

These characteristics start to show the role the 'in' terminology can play. His over-riding concern is to avoid the perils both of the solitary God (whether Sabellian or Arian) and of ditheism. If Father and Son are permanently discrete Persons then modalism is impossible. The one does not simply reduce to the other (or to a hidden third).

If the relationship is permanently reciprocal, so that the Son contains the Father as well as vice versa, this 'in-ness' appears to be different from the way the Father is 'in' creation. The creator-creation relation is neither permanent, nor reciprocal. Thus Hilary describes the Father: *Ipse extra omnia et in omnibus, capiens universa et capiendus a nemine*.¹⁸¹ Yet 'containing' the Father is just what the Son does.¹⁸² God is somehow 'external' to the universe, but this reciprocal 'in-dwelling' negates such externality.

¹⁷⁹ *DeT* III.1.

¹⁸⁰ 'apart' in the translation cited above.

¹⁸¹ *DeT* III.2.

If Father and Son are permanently ‘not isolated’, then clearly the Father in particular cannot be ‘solitary’. Moreover, if Father and Son are permanently not isolated, they are not two independent severable beings: this, then, negates ditheism. For Hilary, the ‘in’ terminology provides an account of divine unity, a theme he develops emphatically.

The development of ‘in-ness’ in terms of unity is especially evident in III.4.

Hilary writes:

What is in the Father is in the Son also; what is in the Unbegotten is in the only-begotten also. The One is from the Other, and they two are a Unity [*uterque unum*]; not two made One [*non duo unus*], yet one in the Other, for that which is in both is the same. The Father is in the Son, for the Son is from Him; the Son is in the Father, because the Father is his sole origin; the Only-Begotten is in the Unbegotten, because He is the Only-Begotten from the Unbegotten. Thus mutually each is in the Other, for as all is perfect in the Unbegotten Father, so all is perfect in the Only-begotten Son. This is the Unity [*unitas*]¹⁸³ which is in Son and Father.

This interestingly echoes John 10:30 and Hilary’s understanding of that verse.

This is evident in the sharp, if fine, distinction, between the masculine *unus* and the neuter *unum*.¹⁸⁴ Hilary follows¹⁸⁵ the path mapped by Tertullian and others¹⁸⁶ to the effect that John 10:30 envisages Father and Son as distinct Persons with one nature. Hence Sabellianism cannot be true, as shown by the explicit denial in III.4: *non duo unus*.

However, this stress on unity touches also on what it means to say there are two. The two are not simply two separate, independent, beings. They have a *unitas*. It

¹⁸² *DeT* III.1.

¹⁸³ Not a *unio* but a *unitas*.

¹⁸⁴ Reflecting, of course, Jesus’ statement in John 10:30 that he and the Father are one (neuter), rather than one (masculine).

¹⁸⁵ *DeT* VII.25.

¹⁸⁶ See Hanson 1988b:472 to the effect that Tertullian and the Latin tradition are more influential in Hilary’s interpretations than the Greek traditions.

is this aspect that Book VII develops so strongly,¹⁸⁷ and part of its interest is its lengthy discussion of both the major johannine passages that deal with indwelling.¹⁸⁸

Book VII.39 provides a useful summary focus. The denial of ditheism is part of this chapter's climax,¹⁸⁹ but arises from discussion of what John 14:10 implies. Hilary quotes the 'indwelling' words and comments: '*Inseparabiles esse per naturalem similitudinem Patrem et Filium...*'. This involves two elements: that Father and Son are inseparable, something which applies at the level of *Persons*; and that there is a similarity at the level of *nature*. The two are here related: the personal inseparability arises from (is *per*) the 'similitude of nature', thereby underlining again the importance of Hilary's underlying doctrine of God.

Here he is drawing together thoughts that have appeared at greater length and perhaps more disparately in his discussion of John 10:38. Commenting on the indwelling language he says:

*Ita in Deo Patre et Deo Filio neque duos conuocabis deos, quia unum uterque sunt; neque singularem praedicabis, quia uterque non unus est. Non habet igitur fides apostolica duos deos quia nec duos patres habeat nec duos filios. Confitendo Patrem confessa Filium est; credens in Filium credidit et in Patrem: quia et nomen Patris habet in se Fili nomen. Non enim nisi per Filium Pater est: quia non nisi ex Patre sit Filius.*¹⁹⁰

Once again *unus* is distinguished from *unum*, echoing John 10:30.¹⁹¹ More striking, though, is Hilary's consideration of ditheism. There would be ditheism were there two fathers or two sons – duplication at the personal level. Hilary then uses an argument from co-relativity, for the apostolic faith asserts the Son in confessing the

¹⁸⁷ Hilary sees this as centrally important in his defence of the baptismal faith: *DeT* VII.1.

¹⁸⁸ John 10:27-38 in *DeT* VII.22-32 and John 14:6-11 in VII.33-41.

¹⁸⁹ *Dum in Patre et Filio credere Deos duos inpium est...* Hilary characteristically also adds that it is sacrilege to hold the Sabellian belief that Father and Son are one solitary God.

¹⁹⁰ *DeT* VII.31. For the NPNF translation, see Appendix 8.

Father and vice versa. Co-relativity means that the Father and Son are inseparable.¹⁹²

A creed of two fathers or two sons would not involve inseparable persons. True, they would be distinct, but one could 'name' one of the 'fathers' without logically invoking the other.¹⁹³ They would to that extent be independent of each other.¹⁹⁴

Thus, the personal level for Hilary involves distinction (hence no Sabellianism) but also inseparability (hence no ditheism).

Hilary discusses ditheism further in VII.32. The one divine nature is much more visible here:

Thus the apostolic faith in proclaiming the Father, will proclaim Him as one God, and in confessing the Son will confess Him as one God: since one and the same nature exists in both [*quia et eadem adque indissimilis Dei natura sit in utroque*]

Therefore ditheism can also be rebutted because Father and Son each has *eadem adque indissimilis natura*. However, since Hilary says that Father and Son are inseparable *per naturalem similitudinem*,¹⁹⁵ these personal and natural levels are not to be sharply distinguished.

We thus reach a very significant point in Hilary's argument. He rebuts ditheism because there is co-relativity and mutuality at the personal level. This mutual relation at the personal level arises from¹⁹⁶ one and the same nature being in both, such that both are *unum*¹⁹⁷ and have a *unitas*.¹⁹⁸ Hence one is driven back to

¹⁹¹ This does not appear clearly in the NPNF translation, hence the need for citation in the original.

¹⁹² *DeT* VII.39.

¹⁹³ Hence there is a very clear case for the conception being polytheist. 'Father' becomes a generic terms and two generic 'fathers' is aptly paralleled by two generic 'gods'.

¹⁹⁴ Compare Augustine's discussion of relative predicates *De Trinitate* V-VII.

¹⁹⁵ *DeT* VII.39.

¹⁹⁶ Stressing the phrase from *DeT* VII.39 *per naturalem similitudinem*.

¹⁹⁷ *DeT* III.4, VII.31.

¹⁹⁸ *DeT* III.4.

consider this one nature. Clearly Hilary has excluded any understanding that the Son has a nature dissimilar to the Father's - the term *indissimilis* shows that this cannot be so.¹⁹⁹ Hilary's reaction to the Sirmium *blasphemia*, which was open to an anomoean interpretation, confirms this.

However, one returns to the criticisms recounted by Moingt against Hilary,²⁰⁰ that he is content with something other than numerical identity in the divine nature, that generic identity suffices.²⁰¹ To assess this, it is necessary to examine the role 'nature' plays in Hilary's discussion of the 'in' language. This entails looking at the relationship between Hilary's 'of' and 'in' terminology.

Not merely are both 'of' and 'in' terminologies present in Hilary, they are related. Thus the 'in' relationship seems founded on the 'of' relationship.²⁰² For instance, Hilary writes:

The Father is in the Son, for the Son is from Him; the Son is in the Father, because the Father is his sole origin,²⁰³

The same rationale appears later:

yet still the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, and this by no interchange of emanations but by the perfect birth of the living nature. ...²⁰⁴

Here, the 'of' language refers directly to the Son's generation or nativity, while 'in' relations are seen as an outcome of that generation. However, this means that the 'in' language must, like the 'of' language, be then intimately tied to the nature which generates. This is evident from the following argument:

¹⁹⁹ *DeT* VII.32.

²⁰⁰ Moingt 1968:160.

²⁰¹ Hanson 1988b:480 feels it is 'not obvious' whether Hilary goes beyond generic unity.

²⁰² Kaiser adverts to this as a possibility but does not pursue it.

²⁰³ *DeT* III.4.

There is no hint of more natures than one in what we are told of Their possession of the one Divine nature. The truth that God is from God does not multiply God by two; the birth destroys the supposition of a lonely God. And again, because They are interdependent They form an unity; and that They are interdependent is proved by Their being One from One. For the One, in begetting the One, conferred upon Him nothing that was not His own; and the One, in being begotten, received from the One only what belongs to one.²⁰⁵

Hence the ‘in’ relation, with its features of personal distinction yet inseparability, reciprocity, and permanence, emerges as a consequence of generation from a divine nature. Generation from a divine nature means the Begetter retains in whole the nature in which he begets. But such a perfect begetter also gives perfectly. This is a vital difference between human and divine generation.²⁰⁶ Humans cannot give a ‘perfect’ self-sustaining nature to their offspring, because they do not have that nature to give.²⁰⁷ Hilary’s observation that the Son is neither generated from nothing nor from any other than the Father carries immense force. Generated solely from the Father, he necessarily has the Father’s nature.

It will be clear by now that not merely does the ‘in’ terminology seem to arise from the ‘of’ terminology for Hilary, but that the ‘in’ terminology is nuanced by the ‘of’ terminology. This is important and raises the question whether Hilary faithfully retains johannine thought.

After all, John’s Gospel uses ‘in’ terminology of human relationships as well as of the divine relationship: the striking reference is John 17:21-23.²⁰⁸ This section refers to humans dwelling ‘in us’ (sc. Jesus and the Father: verse 21), so that

²⁰⁴ *DeT* VII.31.

²⁰⁵ *DeT* VII.32.

²⁰⁶ *DeT* VII.28. Cf Galtier 1960:104.

²⁰⁷ The *vita* they can give is not *vita in semetipso*.

²⁰⁸ John 15:1ff is also relevant since verse 4 deals with a mutual ‘abiding in’.

indwelling is not only between divine Persons, and discusses one-ness in terms of the Father and Son, on the one hand, being one and human believers, on the other hand, being one (17:22). If humans, who are not divine, can in-dwell God, why should the Son's in-dwelling point to divinity?²⁰⁹

Clearly, John's Gospel has features pointing away from Arianising conclusions: thus the 'in-dwelling' of humans in God on any view differs from the Son's, since the latter is a given within the Gospel, while the former is something that happens, a becoming. Moreover, John speaks of the Father's will to glorify his Son and have humans honour the Son as they do the Father (John 5:23). This is not so of humans generally. Further, the Son is strikingly presented as unique: he is the one the Father sends into the world, uniquely from the Father. It is on this basis that the Son knows the Father in a way humans ordinarily do not (John 1:18, 3:13).

In effect, of course, Hilary's 'of' terminology has picked up this category of sending. His construction of that terminology has already excluded Arianising possibilities,²¹⁰ and since the in-dwelling of Father and Son has been built on the Son being 'of' the Father, it is logical for him to qualify the in-dwelling in a non-Arian way.

This does not do violence to John 17:21-23: Athanasius had noted that this material could be construed as exemplarist. Further, human in-dwelling and Father-Son in-dwelling cannot be precisely parallel since John presents the former as

²⁰⁹ The Arian question is natural. This is not, of course, to say that their answer is natural.

²¹⁰ See especially his exposition of John 5:17-30 in *DeT* VII.

something that has a beginning and is not eternal.²¹¹ The latter as intrinsic, indeed, pre-Incarnate to judge by John 17:5. The discussion therefore centres on a matter of degree: how close is an admittedly limited parallel.

One concludes, though, that Hilary's understanding of indwelling is nuanced by his explanations of the 'of' terminology, so that the perfectly generated Son is in his perfect Father. This is, in effect, an account of circumincession, to which discussion now turns.

Circumincession, to use a non-Hilarian term, is thus a consequence of divine generation. The fact that it is divine nature which generates is decisive. This in turn suggests Hilary's answer to the charge that he is not fully committed to numerical identity.

The presenting issue is whether two divine natures can exist eternally. Hilary's consideration of God's nature apparently precludes this. It was stressed earlier that God for Hilary is a self-authoring being, independent of others who are external (*extra*). Hilary is hostile to the existence of an *external* nature equal to God's:

No creature is equal or like to God, no nature external [*naturae alienae*] to His is comparable in might to Him; it is only the Son, born from Himself, Whom we can without blasphemy liken and equal to Him. Nothing outside Himself [*extra eum*] can be compared to God without insult to His august majesty. If any being, not born from God's self, can be discovered that is like Him and equal to Him in power, then God, in admitting a partner to share His throne, forfeits His pre-eminence. No longer is God One, for a second, indistinguishable from Himself, has arisen. On the other hand, there is no insult in making His own true Son His equal. For then that which is like Him is His own; that which is compared with Him is born from Himself; the Power that can do His own works is not external to Him [*extra se*].²¹²

²¹¹ Compare John 1:12f to the effect that believers *become* children of God.

²¹² *DeT* VII.26.

Hence, ditheism arises when one god is *extra* the other (and vice versa). This would violate Deuteronomy 6:4, and logic, since God, by definition pre-eminent,²¹³ is that no longer. However, this means that Hilary's thought apparently ~~excludes~~ generic identity of substance. For plurality of substance cannot arise from the generation, since the divine nature is indivisible. Nor, though, can plurality of substance 'pre-exist', since Hilary's understanding of divine nature precludes this. Therefore phrases like *eadem adque indissimilis Dei natura*²¹⁴ demand the meaning that the nature is numerically one.²¹⁵

Hilary's handling of the relative merits of *homoousios* and *homoiousios* supports this. Hilary notes, of course, the problems over the term *homoousios*. He draws attention to three potential errors in using the word:

The assertion of the one substance of the Father and the Son signifies either that there is one Person who has two titles, or one divided substance that has made two imperfect substances, or that there is a third prior substance which has been usurped and assumed by two and which is called one because it was one before it was severed into two.²¹⁶

Hilary here refers to some standard objections to *homoousios* terminology, notably its Sabellian associations. Yet his conception of perfect generation ensures that *homoousios* cannot have these obnoxious senses. It cannot be Sabellian, because generation implies distinction. Nor can it imply division, because the nature that generates is indivisible. Nor does it imply an anterior third substance, subsequently divided, for the same reason. Instead he goes on to uphold what *homoousios* means in positive terms:

²¹³ *DeT* I.4-6 and the earlier discussion.

²¹⁴ *DeT* VII.32.

²¹⁵ *Contra* Hanson 1988b:480, Hilary seems clear.

²¹⁶ *DeS* 68.

He is not the Father, but the Son begotten of Him. He is not any portion of God, but is whole God. He is not Himself the source but the image; the image of God born of God to be God. He is not a creature but is God. Not another God in the kind of His substance, but the one God in virtue of the essence of His exactly similar substance. God is not one in Person but in nature, for the Born and the Begetter have nothing different or unlike. After saying all this, he does not err in declaring one substance of the Father and the Son. Nay, if he now denies the one substance he sins.²¹⁷

The telling phrase here is ‘not one in Person but in nature’. Persons and nature, where the former is undoubtedly numerically plural,²¹⁸ are contrasted, thus suggesting that the unity is numerical and not merely generic.²¹⁹ This tallies well with Hilary’s misgivings about *homoiousios*, which he sees as far from satisfactory, despite the potential misunderstandings of *homoousios*.²²⁰ For Hilary, ‘a true natural connexion’ implies *homoousios*.²²¹

The indwelling language is also related to Hilary’s understanding of John 5:19 that the Father and Son perform the same works.²²² When discussing the in-dwelling language of John 14:10f, Hilary returns to this theme and comments that reciprocal indwelling means the Son does the Father’s work, while the Father works in the Son.²²³ Such in-dwelling does not mean that the two are indistinguishable, a criticism mounted of Augustine’s account of inseparable operation.²²⁴ For Hilary the Father works through (*per*) the Son.²²⁵ But personal asymmetries within the circumincessionary relations remain undeveloped, although the motif of derivation, ‘of-ness’, from which circumincession is finally drawn, suggests their presence.

²¹⁷ *DeS* 69.

²¹⁸ Otherwise there would be a risk of Sabellianism.

²¹⁹ Cf Moingt 1968:164 who reaches similar conclusions, following earlier writers.

²²⁰ *DeS* 89 speaks of the word’s ‘inadequacy’. Figura and Doignon 2001:44 and Fortman 1972:130f note the preference for *homoousios*.

²²¹ *DeS* 89.

²²² See 6.5.1. above.

²²³ *DeTVII*.40.

²²⁴ Answers to the fear that inseparable operation loses personal distinction are discussed in chapters 7 and 8 below.

To summarise with respect to the ‘in’ terminology in Hilary, this is derived from the perfect birth.²²⁶ Since the Son is born ‘of’ the Father alone, whose perfect nature is indivisible, it follows that Father and Son are ‘in’ each other, in a unity of nature, as distinct but nevertheless inseparable persons. Thus Hilary’s circumincession arises too from derivation. Such a God is not solitary at the personal level, nor ditheist, for there is no divine nature external to Father and Son.

Hilary’s conception of circumincession, then, ultimately traces back to his understanding of God’s nature. Further, because it traces back to the Father’s nature given to the Son, there is a relational asymmetry. There are not two fathers or two sons, but Father and Son of the Father. Circumincession neither undoes nor negates the Father-Son relation from which it arises. What circumincession achieves is a personal relationship which is reciprocal yet without any external or alien nature: it enshrines personal diversity without ditheism.

6.5.3. *The Language of Externality*

It has been stressed that the Father is not subject to ‘externality’. In his early discussion of the doctrine of God, Hilary has noted: ‘...that which is self-existent cannot have left outside itself [*extra se*] anything superior to itself.’²²⁷ Nor is it simply superiority that creates problems. This is clear from later argument:

If any being, not born from God’s self, can be discovered that is like Him and equal to Him in power, then God, in admitting a partner to share His throne, forfeits His pre-eminence.²²⁸

²²⁵ *DeT* VII.40.

²²⁶ It should be stressed that Hilary envisages the ‘in’ terminology as present in the OT as well. He places considerable reliance on Isaiah 45:11-16. However, the correctness of Hilary’s case does not stand or fall by this point, so his treatment of the passage is to be found in Appendix 6.

²²⁷ *DeT* I.4.

²²⁸ *DeT* VII.26.

Hilary explains this later in the section in terms of a power that arises outside God (*extra se*). The rationale, clearly, is that this would eliminate the unfettered monarchy Hilary associates with God, and that the objection to something *extra* God which is his equal is its independence of him.

The generation of the Son, though, involves no such externality. Born ‘of’ the Father, the Son has not arisen *extra* the Father.²²⁹ Moreover, since birth from such a God involves no separation, but entails each being ‘in’ the other reciprocally (*invicem*), the Son never becomes *extra* the Father. This in-dwelling means that although the Father is Father by relation with another Person, that relationship is not with one *extra* himself. Therefore, the ‘of’ and ‘in’ language negates any polytheistic idea that personal differentiation amounts to saying there is a god *extra* God.

What, though, of the Son? If the Son is truly God, then clearly there cannot be any god *extra* him either. Hilary was apparently well aware of this logic. He recognises the force of the heretics’ arguments over Jesus’ ignorance: they argue that the ignorance suggests an external force more powerful than he.²³⁰ Hilary similarly feels that he must deny the Son came to earth because of external power.²³¹

However, again the generation aids Hilary. Hilary does have a place for the Son’s ordered obedience to the Father,²³² but here the point is that if the Son is ‘in’ the Father such that he is not external to the Father, the Father is equally ‘in’ the Son and

²²⁹ E.g. *DeT* V.37: the Son is not born *aliunde*. VII.2: the Son is *neque aliunde aut ex nihilo sed ex Deo*.

²³⁰ *DeT* IX.58 *vis aliqua exterior eo potior...*

²³¹ *DeT* X.69 *exterior potestas*.

²³² See 6.6. below.

not external to him. In the case of the Son too, then, ‘of’ and ‘in’ language negates any externality that would deny his divinity.

To this extent, the language of externality forms the converse of the ‘in’ and ‘of’ language noted by Kaiser,²³³ and contributes significantly to Hilary’s trinitarian grammar because it clarifies what he wishes to deny

6.6. Generation and Divine relationships

6.6.1. *Material in De Trinitate*

Hilary, therefore, has used generation to ground relations in which the Son fully shares the Father’s power and life. The question then arises of how the wills of Father and Son relate. The Arians propose that unanimity of will adequately explains Scripture’s unity language.²³⁴ Hilary deals with this at length in book IX of *De Trinitate*, stressing that the Son indeed has harmony of will with the Father: ‘...it is true that where the unity of nature is proclaimed the agreement of will cannot be denied...’.²³⁵ He picks up various texts used in this connection by the Arians,²³⁶ and deals with them in the rest of the book. His perspective is that the Son remained fully God in the Incarnation,²³⁷ and consequently there are two natures at stake in the events of Jesus’ earthly ministry. There is thus a twofold aspect to Jesus’ teaching, things pertaining to his humanity and things relating to his divinity.²³⁸

²³³ Kaiser 1976.

²³⁴ Obviously John 10:30 in particular.

²³⁵ *DeT* IX.1.

²³⁶ *DeT* IX.2 He mentions Mark 10:18; John 17:3; 5:19; 14:28 and Mark 13:32. Proverbs 8:22 is, of course, reserved for Book XII.

²³⁷ *DeT* IX.4.

²³⁸ *DeT* IX.5.

Hilary is not, apparently, directly faced with the argument that obedience in itself in the Incarnation necessarily disproves the Son's divinity.²³⁹ Certainly Arians did rely on John 5:19, but the argument about the verse that Hilary meets is focused not on the question of obedience but on the Son's apparent lack of power.²⁴⁰ Hilary's answer does not therefore explicitly deal with arguments about obedience. Instead his discussion suggests that the verse deals with authority, not strength and power,²⁴¹ and he majors on the Son's work being identified with the Father's work,²⁴² thereby implying the Son's nature is equal to, and identical with,²⁴³ the Father's.

However, *De Trinitate* IX contains indications of how the obedience argument could be faced. First, when discussing the twofold aspect of the Son's earthly ministry, Hilary comments:

*Nec tamen se Deo Patri non et fili honore et hominis condicione subdente: cum et nativitas omnis se referat ad auctorem, et caro se universa secundum Deum profiteatur infirmam.*²⁴⁴

This speaks of subjection (*se...subdente*), but the question arises whether this is only *qua* the Son's humanity. On this view, *fili honore* and *hominis condicione* refer to the same relationship; human-God. This, though, is unattractive on syntactical grounds. The *et...et* construction perhaps more naturally suggests a parallelism, a possibility supported by the next clause where *nativitas* and *caro* are differentiated. Moreover, *nativitas* is a key term Hilary uses to designate the eternal relation between Father and Son. In the work's overall context, it is more attractive to see the Sonship in question as divine, not human. A further consideration is that a reference to the two aspects of

²³⁹ Contrast later Homoian arguments produced by Maximinus against Augustine.

²⁴⁰ *DeT* IX.43.

²⁴¹ *DeT* IX.45.

²⁴² *DeT* IX.44.

²⁴³ The equality suggests the identity: *aequalitatem autem non nisi ex eadem esse natura*.

²⁴⁴ *DeT* IX.5.

Jesus Christ, divine Son and real human, is precisely the immediate context of IX.5. Lastly, the idea that ‘sonship’/nativity is readily glossed as referring to a human creature of God is exactly something Hilary wishes to attack. It would therefore be inept for him to muddy the waters by conflating the ideas here.

On balance, then, this passage suggests a two-fold submission to the Father by the Son in the Incarnation: one *qua* Son, and one *qua* human being. This, of course, implies that the Son’s generation itself grounds obedience to the Father. Since that generation is an eternal relation independent of the Incarnation, this further suggests that the Father’s authority is eternal.

Certainly authority language is used of the Father, notably in *De Trinitate* IX.45 as Hilary deals with John 5:19. For Hilary, the phrase ‘can do nothing’ refers to authority (*auctoritas*), which the Son derives from the Father. The logic of this is that the Father is the ultimate source of authority (otherwise why refer to him?), and that the Son’s is derived.²⁴⁵ Ultimate authority also seems to reside in the Father in Hilary’s discussion of Mark 13:32 and the day of the Son’s return. As Hilary closes his discussion of the Son’s apparent ignorance,²⁴⁶ he appeals to the Father’s authority (*potestas*).²⁴⁷ This is something the Father has reserved to himself, which again leaves the Father as the one ultimately setting out the plan for the ages.

A possible response is that the Son is indeed subject to the Father’s authority, but only for the events of the Incarnation. This would, though, be costly. Hilary

²⁴⁵ This relates closely to ideas of divine monarchy, even if the term is not employed.

²⁴⁶ Hilary in fact thinks the Son does know but is not at that point disclosing. Contrast Athanasius, who, amongst others, attributed this to the humanity.

²⁴⁷ *DeT* IX.75.

stresses that the Son indeed reveals the Father in the Incarnation.²⁴⁸ It would therefore be uncomfortable for Hilary to concede that the Incarnation and the relations it discloses are not truly those of Father and Son.

6.6.2. *Material in De Synodis*

However, Hilary's thought on this point is clearest in *De Synodis*. He needs to comment on Anathema XVII of the Sirmium Creed aimed at Photinus, which says 'For we do not make the Son the equal or peer of the Father, but understand the Son to be subject.' Hilary observes that the aim is to refute ditheism, not to deny that the Son is truly God. His explanation merits lengthy citation.

That the Son is not on a level with the Father and is not equal to Him is chiefly shewn in the fact that He was subjected to Him to render obedience, in that the Lord rained from the Lord and that the Father did not, as Photinus and Sabellius say, rain from Himself, as the Lord from the Lord; in that He then sat down at the right hand of God when it was told Him to seat Himself; in that He is sent, in that He receives, in that He submits in all things to the will of Him who sent Him. But the subordination of filial love is not a diminution of essence, nor does pious duty cause a degeneration of nature, since in spite of the fact that both the Unborn Father is God and the Only-begotten Son of God is God, God is nevertheless One, and the subjection and dignity of the Son are both taught in that by being called Son He is made subject to that name which because it implies that God is His Father is yet a name which denotes His nature. Having a name which belongs to Him whose Son He is, He is subject to the Father both in service and name; yet in such a way that the subordination of His name bears witness to the true character of His natural and exactly similar essence.²⁴⁹

Here the subjection is described exactly as obedience. The obedience, moreover, is not limited to the Incarnation, but covers events of pre-Incarnation salvation history too. Obedience does not, then, start with the assumption of human flesh. Obedience cannot even be restricted to salvation-history broadly considered, for Hilary here relates it to the filial relation itself. The very relationship grounding the

²⁴⁸ Note his insistence that it is not enough to think there is a God: saving faith is in him as Father: *DeT* I.17, and this knowledge is available in the Incarnation.

²⁴⁹ *DeS* 51.

Son's divinity is used here to indicate the Son's subjection to the Father in obedience terms. Hilary says:

Having a name²⁵⁰ which belongs to Him whose Son He is, He is subject to the Father both in service and name.²⁵¹

Hilary also deals explicitly with whether obedience subtracts from the Son's divinity. He confirms it does not.²⁵² The filial relationship results in both. It therefore seems difficult in Hilary's thought to have a Son who is divine through generation from a perfect nature without that Son being subject to his Father by virtue of that same generation.

Later material in *De Synodis* supports this. Commenting on John 5:19 Hilary stresses the Son's obedience even while doing the same works as the Father, which reveals his nature.²⁵³ Later, he demands to know why some refuse to recognise the divinity of the Son:

Is this due to ignorance that the Son, like all other things, is made subject to the Father, and while thus subjected is not distinguished from them? A distinction does exist, for the subjection of the Son is filial reverence, the subjection of all other things is the weakness²⁵⁴ of things created.²⁵⁵

For Hilary, therefore, not all obedience betokens ontological inferiority. Obedience may rest on distinguishable grounds. For the Son, such obedience exists, and rests, on the very fact that he is Son, that is, 'of' the Father.

Could one, then, deny the obedience yet retain the Sonship? Not on Hilary's rationale. Instead his position entails that denying the obedience denies the relation

²⁵⁰ The name in question is, of course, that he is God. For Hilary this name refers to the Son's nature.

²⁵¹ *DeS* 51.

²⁵² This is also strongly suggested in *DeT* IX.53 and XI.12.

²⁵³ *DeS* 75.

²⁵⁴ Note the terminological similarity to *DeT* IX.5 and the theme of the weakness of the flesh.

itself. If the relationship of sonship is absent, then Hilary's account of how both First and Second Persons may be truly divine without ditheism would fail. The obedience does not seem to be readily severable from the rest of Hilary's account of divine sonship.

6.7. Conclusions

The doctrine of God is consistently important in Hilary's theology, and relates to several features in his thought. First, God's infinite nature renders him inaccessible to human speculation. This, secondly, highlights the significance of the Incarnation of God's Son as the means by which God is truly known and underlines the importance of defending the Son's divinity, for without this the knowledge of God evaporates. Thirdly, since God is a fully self-authoring being, any externality that is independent of him, either so as to act imperatively on him, or so as to be immune from him, is precluded. Divine monarchy is present, then, in Hilary, albeit Tertullian's terminology is absent. Fourthly, Hilary uses this very nature of God to provide an account of generation that is neither emanationist nor involves dividing the divine nature, but is an eternal filial relationship in which the Son shares his Father's nature and throne. The perfect begets the perfect. Derivation plays an important part in this account. Since the Son is 'of' the Father alone, he fully shares his Father's indivisible nature and is himself inseparable from the Father. This derivation means that all ultimately traces back to the Father.

Hilary is driven to provide an account of generation by the Incarnation, which he regards as revelatory. He regards Jesus' claim to be the Son as substantiated by

²⁵⁵ *DeS* 79.

him doing the works that God alone can do. Jesus as Son entails that God is not solitary (Father and Son mean there is differentiation), but also precludes ditheism. Hilary's terminology here proves richly fruitful. Since the Son is 'of' the perfect, self-authoring God, and 'in' him, there is no externality between Father and Son that would constitute polytheism and destroy the Father's monarchy. Being 'of' the Father and 'of' nothing else, the Son is not independent, and because Father and Son are 'in' each other, there is no division that means they are external to each other. The 'in' language is not at odds with the 'of' language, but derives from it, so that relations of circumincession are drawn from, not opposed to, the relations suggested by generation.

Within this framework, Hilary is bound to pursue the filial relationship in terms of the Son's obedience to the Father: this is given within the data of the Incarnation itself, and to repudiate this aspect of the revelation of the Incarnation risks compromising the Incarnation as the source of the knowledge of God. Hilary regards himself as without any taint of ontological subordinationism. Since the perfect Father begets perfectly, the Son is all that the Father is except Father. As the Father is 'in' the Son and vice versa, the Son's obedience does not constitute an obedience to an external, independent person which would be inconsistent with his own divinity.

Father and Son 'have' alike the Father's nature and the Son's actions in the world are done with the Father's power. This implies that, as well as being inseparable since they are 'in' each other and the Son is 'of' the Father, their actions in the economy are inseparable also: the Father works in the Son. This is relatively

undeveloped in Hilary. It remained for Hilary's successor, Augustine to articulate this more fully. To him we now turn.

CHAPTER 7: AUGUSTINE AND THE INSEPARABLE YET DISTINCT TRINITY

It is proposed that:

7(a). Augustine's conceptual framework for Trinitarian theology features two pairs of ideas: inseparability and distinction, and eternal relation and temporal action.

7(b). The Father-Son relationship involves both inseparability (there is no Father without the Son) and a personal distinction involving particularity or personal uniqueness (the relation of Father and Son is not reversible).

7(c). The Father-Son relation requires equality of nature.

7(d). Personal inseparability yet distinction in the eternal relation grounds Augustine's doctrine of inseparable divine operation in temporal action in which the Father and Son do numerically identical actions, not simply actions of the same genus.

7(e). Inseparable operation is important for Augustine in refuting polytheistic ideas of discrete and independent actions by the Persons.

7(f). Augustine's is not a modalising trinity.

7(g). Augustine does not subordinate the Persons to the one substance.

7(h). Augustine's account is most vulnerable in the areas of the mission and of the Son's obedience, where some of several explanations he offers are open to challenge as departing from the data of the Incarnation.

7(i). Augustine's writings nevertheless contain a theme which stresses that the Son is the obedient agent of the Father who acts with and through him, but not symmetrically. This reflects and preserves the principle that the Father is the principium of deity, and that the Son derives filially from him.

7(j). Augustine draws his account particularly from his exegesis of John 5:19ff and is not uniformly committed to severing the economic and immanent trinities. This in turn requires commitment to the revelatory value of the economy.

7(k). The eternal relations of Father and Son are grounded in the character of God as simple and unchanging.

7(l). Fullness of happiness lies in knowing the triune God.

7(m). Augustine's stress on inseparable operation drawn from inseparable personal relation stands in continuity with, but articulates more fully, earlier accounts of joint operation.

7.1. Introduction

R. Jenson remarks that Augustine's intellectual and spiritual experience 'has blighted our trinitarianism'.¹ This is striking but not unrepresentative of some of the adverse comment that Augustine's trinitarian theology has excited in recent times.

The perspective for viewing this apparently unsatisfactory trinitarian theology was proposed by one of Augustine's early and most influential modern critics, A. Harnack. He spoke of Augustine 'carrying out monotheism strictly and thoroughly.'² In what follows monotheism and its entailments form a constant backdrop, with the persistent question whether Augustine somehow over-stresses it.

7.2. Criticism of Augustine

I. Chevalier long ago observed that Augustine tended to attract either unqualified praise or merciless criticism.³ The latter has perhaps pre-dominated since Harnack,⁴ but significant challenges to that perspective over the last decade make it necessary to review these criticisms in some detail.⁵

7.2.1. The Broader Context - 'the de Régnon Paradigm'

L. Ayres describes a common assumption that western trinitarian theology starts with unity and moves to tri-unity, while eastern trinitarian theology does the

¹ Jenson 1982:116.

² Harnack 1898 V:4.

³ Chevalier 1940:3-6.

⁴ Harnack's statements IV 1898: 130 and 131 n. 1 set the trend for English-speaking scholars such as Jenson 1982, La Cugna 1991, A. Plantinga 1991 and C. Gunton 1997.

⁵ M.R.Barnes 1999a, Bray 1992, S. Lancaster 1996, Ayres 2000a and 2000b and earlier in French F. Bourassa 1977 alike challenge common charges.

opposite.⁶ Barnes had earlier suggested such views were versions of T. de Régnon's contrast between 'patristic' and 'scholastic' trinitarian theologies.⁷ Within this polar depiction of theological history, Augustine is often envisaged as decisively moving away from 'Greek' or 'Eastern' methods.⁸

Two other factors must be considered with this 'de Régnon paradigm', as it may be called. First, the influence of Harnack's view, that Augustine is incipiently modalist,⁹ and secondly the enormous concern, associated perhaps especially with J. Zizioulas,¹⁰ that the concept of 'person' not be evacuated of content and abstracted from relationship. Such a loss of 'person' could contribute to a solipsistic individualism of fundamentally indistinguishable human units. If Augustine's trinitarian theology indeed leads to such conclusions, then, within the de Régnon paradigm of two very different branches of trinitarian thought, the alternative inevitably looks preferable. Cappadocian theology, of course, is felt to offer such an alternative.

However, such use of the de Régnon paradigm is dubious. First, has Augustine been accurately represented and Harnack's influential dictum in particular been justified? The current chapter largely revolves around this.

Secondly, have the Cappadocians themselves been rightly construed? Reservations have been voiced about the Cappadocians' commitment to a 'social'

⁶ Ayres 2000a:40.

⁷ M.R.Barnes 1995:55. Barnes depicts de Régnon himself as holding a nuanced and less evaluative view of differences between 'East' and 'West'. See M.R.Barnes 1995:51-54.

⁸ See the description in M.R.Barnes 1999a:152.

⁹ Harnack IV 1898:131 n.

¹⁰ Zizioulas 1991.

version of the Trinity. Thus one central text falling for interpretation is Gregory of Nyssa's *Ad Ablabium*. Yet Ayres plausibly contends that Gregory deals with three human persons here, not because it is his preferred trinitarian analogy but because his correspondent raised the issue.¹¹ Similarly, S. Coakley insists that Gregory does not 'start' with the three.¹² Rather, the Cappadocians shared certain concerns with Augustine: divine simplicity;¹³ and the inseparability of divine operations.¹⁴ Hence J. Milbank cautions against over-drawing contrasts between Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁵

Thirdly, caution has been sounded more generally about '...construing "persons" as "relations"...',¹⁶ let alone finding such ideas in the Cappadocians.¹⁷

Overall, these criticisms suggest greater commonality between Augustine and the Cappadocians than the polarity envisaged by the de Régnon paradigm admits.¹⁸ This re-evaluation does not necessarily impinge on the contentions of Zizioulas and others that personhood must be so grounded as to preserve individual and relational values while guarding against solipsism.

¹¹ Ayres 2002:447.

¹² Coakley 1999:125.

¹³ Coakley 1999:131 fn. 30.

¹⁴ Ayres 2000a: 48 and 2002:481 and Coakley 1999:133 commenting on *Ad Graecos* 24-5.

¹⁵ Milbank 1998:94.

¹⁶ Coakley 1999:123f, citing H. Harris' critique. Harris' misgivings relate, *inter alia*, to the ethical consequences of such relational construction of persons - a 'relational determinism' in which, without relations, one might not count as a person. Harris 1998:217, 231-33.

¹⁷ L. Turcescu 2002:530-34.

7.2.2. *Specific Criticisms*

Within the de Régnon paradigm, several distinct although related criticisms have been made. It is fitting to start with the charge of modalism. Harnack famously comments:

We can see Augustine only gets beyond Modalism by the mere assertion that he does not wish to be a modalist, and by the aid of ingenious distinctions between different ideas.¹⁹

Harnack prepares the ground for this by commenting on Augustine's desire to eradicate lingering subordinationism, but adding this took Augustine towards modalism.²⁰ Augustine's doctrine of simplicity, he continues, tends finally to eliminate the distinct characteristics of the Persons.²¹ He cites *De Civitate Dei* XI.10 as disclosing what simplicity is for Augustine.²² Earlier, Harnack had described modalism as envisaging '...Christ to be God in a human body, the Father become flesh.'²³ Considerable later scholarship has found Harnack persuasive,²⁴ frequently for Harnack's reason, namely, Augustine's doctrine of divine simplicity.²⁵ Simplicity therefore emerges as a key area for consideration.

If modalist, Augustine would, further, inevitably tend to sunder economic and immanent trinities,²⁶ as happened to Praxeas, according to Tertullian. Modalism could readily therefore pressurise Augustine's concept of revelation.

¹⁸ Thus Bray 1992:148 envisages Augustine as beginning with a recognisably Cappadocian picture, although developing it. Contrast e.g. Jenson 1982:119 who sees Augustine rejecting Cappadocian theology.

¹⁹ Harnack 1898 IV:131 n 1.

²⁰ Harnack 1898 IV:129.

²¹ Harnack 1898 IV:129.

²² Harnack 1898 IV:130 n. 1.

²³ Harnack 1897 III:51f. The surrounding context is Sabellianism and its *υιοπάτωρ*. Harnack writes 'The central proposition of Sabellius ran that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were the same. Three names accordingly were attached to one and the same being.'

²⁴ Plantinga 1991:308 speaks of 'endless suspicions of modalism'.

²⁵ E.g. Jenson 1982:119 and Plantinga 1991:316.

²⁶ Jenson 1982:116.

Just such pressure is evident, perhaps, in the starting-point of Augustine's trinitarian theology. Ayres mentions the common assumption that Augustine starts with divine unity,²⁷ and standard histories of theology often reflect this.²⁸ Naturally, this criticism may stem from a de Régnon paradigm portraying the Cappadocians as starting with 'three-ness'.

However, the notion of 'starting-point' is ambiguous. 'Starting-point' may mean simply the first proposition in the sequence of presentation of argument. Alternatively, it may mean the dominating principle governing others. It is, no doubt, important to note that the sequence of argument in *De Trinitate* in particular starts by examining Scripture.²⁹ However, one-ness could conceivably still be the dominating principle.

If one-ness is indeed dominating, other themes may become attenuated. The misgiving is that personal categories are diminished, even subsumed, under the category of substance.³⁰ One section of *De Trinitate* especially falls for construction, Book VII.11: this is frequently cited as disastrously fusing person and substance.³¹

If there is an ultimate one-ness and a fusion of person and substance, there is a risk, the argument runs, that God becomes merely reflexive or narcissistic. If God is ultimately monopersonal, then the love the 'Persons' have seems really a love of self,

²⁷ Ayres 2000a:40.

²⁸ E.g. Fortman 1972:140, Lampe 1997:117. Although Fortman does not necessarily see this as linked to modalism: see Fortman 1972:143.

²⁹ *DeT* I.4 'But first we must establish by the authority of the holy scriptures whether the faith is in fact like that [sc. that God is triune].'

³⁰ Notably in the argument of La Cugna 1991:88 and Zizioulas 1991:39f. La Cugna in fact sees Augustine as inconsistent: La Cugna 1991:89.

not the other. La Cugna associates this with Augustine's very extensive use of psychological analogies.³² The psychological analogies may show precisely a love of *oneself*.³³ Some references in *De Trinitate* proceed on just these lines.³⁴ Such an understanding would fit only too well with the individualism decried by Zizioulas.³⁵

Certainly Augustine's psychological analogies have caused grave concern, being associated with modalism,³⁶ and the division between eastern and western theologies.³⁷ Clearly the psychological analogies are used in *De Trinitate* only after extensive scriptural and linguistic discussion. Thus, Augustine does not commence his trinitarian explanations from the analogy. It is, though, equally true that the analogies are scarcely 'mere' analogies. First, there is the sheer bulk of *De Trinitate* the analogies occupy, and secondly, Augustine's signal preference for discussing these analogies rather than the more normal stock from pro-Nicene literature: why the preference for the psychological analogies?³⁸

In conjunction with the psychological analogy comes a fear that this leads readily to a natural theology of a highly suspicious variety,³⁹ where God's characteristics are read off from the presumed contours of the human psyche, an accolade for Feuerbach from an unexpected source.

³¹ The passage is cited by e.g. La Cugna 1991:88, Plantinga 1988:46, 1991:308 fn. 20, Gunton 1997:42. The interpretation is disputed: see e.g. Chevalier 1940:49-51. Ayres 2000b:64 also draws different conclusions from *DeT* VII.

³² La Cugna 1991:101.

³³ The plural is apt given the variations of *DeT* Books IX-XIV.

³⁴ *DeT* IX.8, XIV.10, 11.

³⁵ Zizioulas 1991.

³⁶ Noted, but not expressly endorsed, by O'Collins 1999:10.

³⁷ Noted, but again not expressly endorsed, by Hart 2002:542.

³⁸ Augustine is certainly familiar with e.g. light and radiance (*Sermons* 117.11 and 118.2) and river and fountain and root and tree (*De Fide et Symbolo* 17).

³⁹ E.g. La Cugna 1991:101. Jenson 1982:117f likewise fears a natural theology in Augustine but because of the appropriation of Hellenic ideas.

Finally, there is criticism that in Augustine's theology any member of the Trinity could have become incarnate. Not all, perhaps, would see this position as a ground for criticism. It is, however, a very distinctive position attributed to Augustine.⁴⁰ Its significance would possibly be that the Son's mission is not a function of his eternal generation by the Father, tending therefore to sever mission and procession. This again would diminish the economy's revelatory significance.

7.2.3. The Criticisms in Review

These criticisms cluster around a nexus of topics:

- *one-ness* (implicated in the charges of modalism, narcissism, starting-point and sacrifice of relational categories);
- *revelation* (implicated in the charges about modalism, the significance of the economic trinity, natural theology, and the issue of who became incarnate); and
- *person* (implicated in the charges about modalism, the significance of the economic trinity, starting-point, narcissism, the sacrifice of relational categories, natural theology,⁴¹ and the issue of who became incarnate).

The characteristic flavour is that one-ness has been so emphasised as to distort revelation and person.

With these current criticisms in mind, it falls to review the contexts in which Augustine found himself articulating trinitarian doctrine.

⁴⁰ As Bourassa 1977:672 fn. 2 notes.

7.3. The Polemical Context of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology

7.3.1. Was there a Polemical Context?

An important feature for earlier trinitarian theologians was their polemical setting. Is this also true for Augustine? There is an identifiable target in some later works, the *Answer to an Arian Sermon* (419)⁴², the *Debate with Maximinus* (427/8), and the *Answer to Maximinus* (427/8).⁴³ The target here is 'Arianism',⁴⁴ although what that entails at this date requires further discussion.

It is, though, significant to have these later sources. For they should reflect Augustine's mature thought after completing *De Trinitate*, so providing extra interpretative control,⁴⁵ and also because comparisons with earlier pro-Nicene theologians are more straightforward where 'Arianism' is expressly the issue. Concerns with 'Arianism' are also signalled by the superscriptions to *Sermons* 117, 135 and 140⁴⁶ and mentioned in the body of the sermon in *Sermons* 117.6 and 126.8. These refutations of 'Arianism' are, obviously, in the course of Augustine's pastoral ministry.

Does *De Trinitate* itself, though, have a polemical setting? Barnes has spoken of the dangers of abstracting *De Trinitate* from its polemical context.⁴⁷ Clearly Augustine wishes to address certain questions that have been put to him: 'People ask

⁴¹ This charge arises from the prominence of the psychological analogy, which is entwined in the issue of the human person.

⁴² So Teske 1995:119, although he notes the more usual date is 418.

⁴³ Dates for the *Debate with Maximinus* (hereafter *Deb Max*) and the *Answer to Maximinus* (hereafter *Ans Max*) are taken from Teske 1995.

⁴⁴ *Answer to the Arian Sermon* (hereafter *Ans Ser*) I,1 'the preceding Arian sermon'. In *Deb Max* 2 Maximinus says he holds the faith ratified at Ariminum, a council associated with 'Arianism'.

⁴⁵ H. Drobner 2000:19f notes the danger of establishing Augustine's trinitarian thought from too narrow a range of material. M.R.Barnes 1995b:248 laments the comparative neglect of these later texts.

⁴⁶ This sermon is preached against the errors of Maximinus, 'a bishop of the Arians'.

⁴⁷ M.R.Barnes 1995b: 245, 247.

us these questions to the point of weariness...’⁴⁸ As it happens, those questions relate to inseparable operation⁴⁹ and the Holy Spirit, and are not explicitly linked to ‘Arianism’. However, the questions of I.8 are not manifestly hostile. Augustine wants to teach, rather than refute, the questioners.⁵⁰

‘Arianism’ is nevertheless very much in Augustine’s mind. *De Trinitate* V.4 describes a ‘most cunning and ingenious device’, an argument that the ingenerate Father and generate Son cannot be of the same substance, since all predicates of God are predicates of substance. This argument is the ground for the extensive discussion of Books V-VII so that its refutation seems important for Augustine.

It is less clear who the ‘Arians’ of Book V are.⁵¹ E. Hill suggests Eunomianism is the target,⁵² and Eunomius was not unknown to Augustine.⁵³ However, the argument explicitly linked to Eunomius is not that of Book V, but one relating to the Father’s will in begetting the Son. While the argument of Book V may have a ‘Eunomian’ ring,⁵⁴ this does not alone demonstrate Eunomius was in mind. It is obviously difficult to demonstrate that only Eunomians deployed this argument. Indeed, the ‘Arian’ Maximinus produces something very similar.⁵⁵ Barnes thus

⁴⁸ *DeT* 1.8.

⁴⁹ Also an issue in *Sermon* 126 on John 5:19. Inseparable operation in Augustine’s hands is inconsistent with the ‘Arian’ idea that the Son is less: *Sermon* 126.8.

⁵⁰ This does not preclude *DeT* I interacting with Homoian theology. Such theology might have sparked the questions for the faithful.

⁵¹ For Arianism and Homoianism, see Appendix 5.

⁵² Hill 1985:68f. Chevalier 1940:22 had reached similar conclusions.

⁵³ *DeT* XV.38.

⁵⁴ Eunomius was renowned for dialectical and philosophical skills and the argument in Book V is about substance and accident and proceeds in a quasi-syllogistic form.

⁵⁵ *Deb Max* 13. This would not preclude Maximinus from deriving it from a Eunomian source.

prefers Latin Homoianism as the target of Book V,⁵⁶ arguing that Eunomianism was not a real problem in the Latin West.⁵⁷

Therefore Augustine has a concern with ‘Arianism’ both within *De Trinitate* and elsewhere. While not, perhaps, the sole target for *De Trinitate*, it emerges as one major concern. It is therefore fitting to consider the ‘Arianism’ that Augustine encountered.

7.3.2. *Definitions of ‘Arians’*

Augustine can well distinguish varieties of ‘Arianism’. Thus he discriminates between early Arians, who asserted of the Son that ‘there was a time when he was not’ and late Arians who admitted the Son had no beginning in time.⁵⁸ Importantly, however, both are described as ‘Arian’. Augustine’s knowledge in *De Trinitate* of Eunomius has already been mentioned. Elsewhere, in *Heresies* Augustine differentiates Arians from Semiarians, the latter conceding that the Son is of like essence with the Father while full Arians denied even likeness.⁵⁹ However, a clue about the ‘essence’ of ‘Arianism’ in Augustine’s view comes with the Arian denial that the Father, Son and Spirit ‘are of one and the same nature or substance...’.⁶⁰ This denial aptly covers early Arians, who said once the Son was not, and also those holding fast to the Council of Ariminum (359), who said the Son was like ‘according to the Scriptures’, but would not say that he was like in all respects.

⁵⁶ M.R.Barnes 1993:185.

⁵⁷ M.R.Barnes 1993:188f.

⁵⁸ *DeT* VI. 1.

⁵⁹ Arians appear as entry XLIX and Semiarians as LI.

⁶⁰ *Heresies* XLIX.

Augustine did witness or encounter active Arianism (within the above definition). Late in his ministry he was, of course, faced with Maximinus in North Africa, but earlier in Milan he had the chance to observe Ambrose's resistance to 'Arian' inroads. To that extent, Arianism would still have appeared as a live issue for Augustine.

This means Augustine can plausibly be envisaged as facing a species of what current scholarship would term western Homoianism, with an allegiance to the Council of Ariminum, but which he would categorise as Arianism since its restricted formula 'like "as the scriptures teach"' fell short of endorsing *homoousios*.⁶¹

7.3.3 *Arguments Augustine was concerned to meet*

Three 'Arian'/Homoian arguments are of particular concern. First, there is the important argument concerning substance outlined in *De Trinitate* V.4.⁶² Augustine has pointed out that God cannot be modified.⁶³ 'Arians'/Homoians use the point to argue as follows:⁶⁴

- since nothing can be said of God 'modification-wise',⁶⁵ all that is said of God is said 'substance-wise';⁶⁶
- To say the Father is ingenerate is then a 'substance-wise' statement;
- But the Son is not ingenerate, but generate;
- Ingenerate and generate are different

⁶¹ Note the definition in *Heresies* XLIX.

⁶² Maximinus argues something very similar *Deb Max* 13.

⁶³ *DeT* V.3. *Deo autem aliquid eiusmodi [sc. mutatio] accidere non potest*. This is joined to a reference to Ex. 3:14 and the statement '*Ego sum qui sum*'.

⁶⁴ *DeT* V.4.

⁶⁵ Hill's translation (Hill 1991) of '*secundum accidens*'.

- Since ingenerateness is taken ‘substance-wise’, Father and Son differ at the level of substance.

This admittedly elegant argument contains interesting features. It builds on a point accepted by Augustine and his pro-Nicene predecessors, that God, as the God who is, is unchangeable.⁶⁷ Another feature is the view that all predication are either ‘substance-wise’ or ‘modification-wise’. Therefore when one eliminates a predication from one category, it must fall into the other. Augustine will go on to challenge just this mutually exclusive but exhaustive dichotomy. Finally, another, in itself, uncontentious point, the Father is ingenerate and the Son generate. The question is about the significance of this difference.

A second argument Augustine must face concerns the sending of the Son and the Spirit. Augustine cites the objection to the orthodox faith that the sending of Son and Spirit demonstrates the Father is greater.⁶⁸ This is not described as an Arian argument in *De Trinitate*, but occurs as such in the *Answer to the Arian Sermon*.⁶⁹

A third argument, closely related to the foregoing, is that the Son’s obedience in the Incarnation indicates that the Father is greater. The *Arian Sermon* itself states:

...[T]he obedience shows that the one towers above and that the other stands underneath in subjection.⁷⁰

Such arguments are present too in the *Debate with Maximinus*,⁷¹ and, as will be seen, Augustine produces several distinct arguments to meet them.

⁶⁶ Hill’s translation (Hill 1991) of ‘*secundum substantiam*’.

⁶⁷ Compare Athanasius on unchangeability *CAr* I.35 Also *Expositio fidei* 3; *Ad Episcopos Aegypti* 17; *CAr* I.10, 52; II.10; *Ad Afros* 7. For Hilary, God as the self-authoring God is not subject to externally imposed change *DeT* I.4-8, II.6,7.

⁶⁸ *DeT* II.7. They argue: ‘*Maiores est qui mittit quam qui mittitur*’.

⁶⁹ *AnsSer* III.4 and IV.

⁷⁰ *Arian Sermon* 34. *ipsa vero obedientia alium supra eminentem, alium subsistentem et subiectum declarat*

One may note here Teske's contention that Maximinus especially holds a principle inevitably leading him to subordinationism.

Though not formulated with any philosophical precision, Maximinus again and again implies that to have one's origin from another or to have received something from another means to be inferior to that other.⁷²

Given Harnack's charges of modalism, it is important to recall that Augustine repudiated Sabellianism and claimed in contrast to uphold distinctions between the Persons,⁷³ and also to clarify what he thought constituted it. Denying that there are three 'somethings' in the Trinity is envisaged as being just what Sabellius held,⁷⁴ while the Noetians are charged with holding that Christ 'is identical with the Father and the Holy Spirit'.⁷⁵ This indicates that for Augustine Sabellianism arises if a theology does not assert distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit but allows them to be identical.

Letter 120 indicates Augustine was aware that trinitarian theology could be accused of holding to a 'fourth thing' behind, as it were, the three Persons. He rejects such a description. This is relevant for the charge that he starts with one divine substance.

For Augustine to be successful on his own terms, his account must meet these arguments, while also not creating the problems with which he has been associated in

⁷¹ *Deb Max* 15.14, 18 and 23.

⁷² Teske 1995:178.

⁷³ *Ans Max* I.xiii 'nos autem [in contrast to the Sabellians] *alium quidem esse Patrem, et alium Filium, sed tamen quod Pater est, hoc esse dicimus Filium.*' See too *Tractate* 70.2.

⁷⁴ *DeT* VII.9.

⁷⁵ *Heresies* XXXVI. *Heresies* XLI depicts Sabellians as differing little from Noetians.

some current scholarship. We turn now to Augustine's fundamental statement of his trinitarian theology.

7.4. Augustine's Foundational Statement

7.4.1. *De Trinitate* I.7

This passage usefully summarises key features of Augustine's trinitarian theology both inside and outside *De Trinitate*. Augustine first clears the ground. He outlines the kinds of misconceptions with which people approach the Trinity,⁷⁶ explains how the Scriptures adapt their expression to our weakness to raise our sight towards God,⁷⁷ promises to investigate first whether the scriptures do teach a trinitarian faith,⁷⁸ and warns that his work will not please all.⁷⁹ He can then set out that faith.

[1] The purpose of all the Catholic commentators I have been able to read on the divine books of both testaments, who have written before me on the trinity which God is, has been to teach that according to the scriptures Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable equality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is the Son is not the Father; and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the Son, and belonging to the threefold unity.

[2] It was not however this same three (their teaching continues) that was born of the virgin Mary, crucified and buried under Pontius Pilate, rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, but the Son alone. Nor was it this same three that came down upon Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism, or came down on the day of Pentecost after the Lord's ascension, with a roaring sound from heaven as though a violent gust were rushing down, and in divided tongues as of fire, but the Holy Spirit alone. Nor was it this same three that spoke from heaven, *You are my Son*, either at his baptism by John, or on the mountain when the three disciples were with him, nor when the resounding voice was heard, *I have both glorified it (my name) and will glorify it again*, but it was the Father's voice alone addressing the Son; although just as Father and

⁷⁶ *DeT* I.1. The errors are: (a) trying to approach incorporeal things on the basis of knowledge of the corporeal; (b) trying to approach eternal unchangeable things on the basis of changeable human intellectual life; and (c) approaching these things not on the basis of corporeal, or changeable incorporeal things, but on one's own suppositions.

⁷⁷ *DeT* I.2 and 3.

⁷⁸ *DeT* I.4.

⁷⁹ *DeT* I.5 and 6.

Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably. This is also my faith inasmuch as it is the Catholic faith.⁸⁰

This requires several remarks. First, Augustine presents himself as conservative, suggesting his statement is both drawn from Scripture and represents no novel synthesis of it, but rather teaches what his predecessors taught.

Moving, secondly, to the passage's main structure. Hill usefully highlights that it falls in two major sections, paragraph 1 dealing with the eternal relations of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and paragraph 2 with the temporal actions of the triune God.

However, there is a further complexity. Within each paragraph, two topics are in view, inseparability and distinction. Thus in paragraph 1 dealing with the eternal relations, the Persons are inseparable yet distinct: the Son is not the Father, the Father not the Son and the Spirit neither Father nor Son. In paragraph 2 the actions are described first in their distinction (the Son alone is born, suffers, dies and rises, and so also with the distinct actions of the other Persons), and are then described as being inseparable actions.

This structural analysis thus yields two pairs of ideas.

- eternal relations < ----- > temporal actions
- inseparability < ----- > distinction

⁸⁰ The paragraphing follows Hill 1991 and enumeration is added for clarity. The Latin text is set out in Appendix 9.

Neither pair features straightforward opposition. Thus the eternal relation-temporal action pair is very close to the conceptual pair procession-mission, and procession and mission are very closely correlated by Augustine.⁸¹ Similarly, distinction and inseparability are presented as both true, not mutually exclusive. Finally, because eternal relation and temporal action are linked, two other linkages emerge. One is between *distinction* at the levels of eternal relation and temporal action and the second is the linkage between *inseparability* at the levels of eternal relation and temporal action. The parallelism in the concluding phrase ‘...just as Father and Son and Holy Spirit are inseparable, so do they work inseparably’ points in just this direction. What follows will largely reflect the conceptual vocabulary articulated here, inseparability and distinction in their temporal and eternal settings.

7.4.2. *Innovative or conservative?*

Reference was made earlier to Jenson’s remark that Augustine knows and repudiates the work of the Cappadocians.⁸² It is therefore interesting to see *De Trinitate* I.7 portraying Augustine as standing in the lines of tradition.⁸³ Doubtless these asseverations could be deemed disingenuous, but they have some substance. Augustine not merely appeals to earlier tradition but employs some of its

⁸¹ *DeT* IV.28 ‘So the Word of God is sent by him whose Word he is; sent by him he is born of. The begetter sends, what is begotten is sent.’ Compare also the derivation of the Spirit’s procession from both Father and Son in relation to the sending of the Spirit by both Father and Son. However, Augustine does not operate a simple correlation of procession and mission: see below.

⁸² Jenson 1982:119.

⁸³ ‘This is also my faith inasmuch as it is the Catholic faith.’

argumentation⁸⁴ and interpretative rules.⁸⁵ Like his predecessors, he is concerned to demonstrate and refute by reference to Scripture.⁸⁶

It is, however, unsatisfactory to see Augustine as simply conservative. Bourassa, concerned to assert Augustine's continuity with earlier pro-Nicenes, rightly admits that he extends preceding theology.⁸⁷ Most conspicuously, perhaps, Augustine re-visits the Old Testament theophanies,⁸⁸ declining to take them uniformly as appearances of the Son,⁸⁹ but insisting that the Father appears at least once in the Old Testament.⁹⁰ Thus Augustine avoids suggesting that the Father is essentially invisible while the Son is essentially visible. Earlier interpretations of Old Testament theophanies as simply huiophanies risked just that, and were therefore exposed to the 'Arian'/Homoian charge that, if the Father was essentially invisible, but the Son essentially visible, then they were essentially unlike.⁹¹

Similarly, Augustine examines predications about the Persons, the presenting issue being the statement that Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24).⁹² Augustine notes that pro-Nicenes used this to illustrate the absurdity of the early

⁸⁴ So Bourassa 1977:697. This is supported by, for example, the argument that a father begets in his own nature *Ans Max* II.xiv.2; also *Sermon* 139.2.

⁸⁵ E.g. understanding certain verses as being said of Jesus in his human nature: *DeT* I.14, 22. *Tractate* 78.2 and *Ans Max* I.v.

⁸⁶ Hence the considerable exegetical content of *DeT* I-VII. Bourassa adds (1977:686) that *DeT* VIII-XIV is likewise in close contact with Scripture. Necessarily the later material featuring Maximinus has exegetical content.

⁸⁷ Bourassa 1977:715.

⁸⁸ *DeT* II.17-32, III.3-27.

⁸⁹ *DeT* II.32.

⁹⁰ *DeT* II.33. He has in mind the vision of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9-14.

⁹¹ Compare the argument relying on the point that anything predicated of God is predicated substantially. *DeT* V.4.

⁹² Raised *DeT* VI.1.

Arian view that ‘once the Son was not’. God could not conceivably have been without his wisdom.⁹³

However, Augustine explains that simply asserting that Christ is the Father’s wisdom could imply that the Father is not wise in himself but only wise by the wisdom he begets.⁹⁴ This would mean that Father and Son were not alike in all respects. Augustine is thus compelled to re-examine the earlier argument precisely to defend the Nicene *homoousion*.⁹⁵ Matters of predication are taken up on this basis in *De Trinitate* VI-VII.

Another striking innovation is the extended use of psychological analogies.⁹⁶ It is worth locating this innovation within the framework *De Trinitate* I.7 outlines. When faced elsewhere with the riddle of a triune God who acts inseparably but whose Persons apparently perform distinct actions,⁹⁷ Augustine uses a psychological analogy, based on memory, understanding and will.⁹⁸ Barnes rightly observes that the analogy’s purpose is to undergird inseparable yet distinct operation.⁹⁹

These three innovative features can be partially grouped around the issues of inseparability and distinction. Old Testament theophanies and the issue raised by 1 Corinthians 1:24 are so handled as to prevent distinctions implying that Father and Son differed in nature. The third feature, psychological analogy, appears outside *De*

⁹³ *DeT* VI.1.

⁹⁴ *DeT* VI.2ff.

⁹⁵ Contrast e.g. Jenson 1982:119 who regards Augustine in some respects as sacrificing the Nicene settlement.

⁹⁶ Augustine was not the first to employ psychological analogies, nor, given his appeals to Genesis 1:26, does he do so purely arbitrarily. But the extent is breath-taking.

⁹⁷ *Sermon* 52 deals with Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3:13.

⁹⁸ *Sermon* 52.20.

⁹⁹ M.R.Barnes 1999a:164 fn 30.

Trinitate as Augustine attempts to illustrate that divine operation is both inseparable and distinct. Hence Barnes contends Augustine was indeed appropriating the Nicene settlement, but re-articulating it, in particular towards a revelation of the unity of the Trinity in its inseparable activities.¹⁰⁰ The idea of inseparable operation is not exclusive to Augustine.¹⁰¹ He recognises though that such ideas have raised questions.¹⁰² The issue is whether his answers do not unintentionally innovate in the way Jenson, La Cugna and others allege.

7.5. Scripture

7.5.1. Rules of Interpretation Outlined

In effect Augustine has three rules for interpreting Scripture, one referring to the divine nature (*forma dei*), the second to the human nature (*forma servi*), but the third to relation, the relation of origin or generation.

These first two rules are found, of course, in earlier pro-Nicene material and are, for Augustine, closely linked to Philippians 2:6f¹⁰³ and its terminology of *forma servi/forma dei*.¹⁰⁴ A passage is taken *forma dei* when it deals with unity and equality of substance,¹⁰⁵ and as *forma servi* when it deals with the Son as less than the Father. This enables Augustine to deal readily with, for instance, John 14:28 in ways similar to his predecessors.

¹⁰⁰ M.R.Barnes 1999a:154.

¹⁰¹ Documented in the Cappadocians by Ayres 2000a:48, 2002:459, referring to *Ad Ablabium*; Coakley 1999:133 referring to *ad Graecos* 24-5 and Jenson 1982:113 referring to Gregory of Nazianzen discussing three suns with one beam.

¹⁰² *DeT* I.8 immediately raises the question after I.7 has set out the conceptual pairs of eternal relations-temporal action and inseparability-distinction.

¹⁰³ Pelikan 1987-8:25 rightly stresses the importance of Phil 2:5-11 for Augustine's canon of interpretation.

¹⁰⁴ Note the extensive quotation in *DeT* I.14.

However, Augustine sees that this initial *forma dei/forma servi* scheme must be supplemented because sometimes it produced absurdity. Thus John 5:19 cannot be taken under the *forma servi* rule because the Son in his creaturely form did not physically see his Father doing all things first.¹⁰⁶ Hence he develops a third rule, a rule of origin:

...which tells us not that the Son is less than the Father, but that he is from the Father [*de Patre*]. This does not imply any dearth of equality, but only his birth in eternity.¹⁰⁷

7.5.2. *Comment on rules of interpretation*

Within this scheme, equality is consistently allocated to the first, *forma dei*.¹⁰⁸ After all, Augustine's translation of Philippians 2:6 reads: *Qui cum in forma Dei esset, non rapinam arbitratus est esse aequalis Deo*. Thus the verse itself links *forma dei* (a question of substance or nature) and equality.¹⁰⁹ So, for Augustine equality relates to predications about nature. It is denied if something is predicated rendering one *nature* less than another. Hence the *maior* of John 14:28 compares the divine nature and the Son in his human nature, *forma servi*.¹¹⁰

The final rule, the rule of origin, is indeed highly desirable. Without it, there is even some risk that the filial relationship could become inarticulable. However, this rule's application may be less straightforward than it seems. Thus, having applied the *forma servi* rule to John 7:16 in *De Trinitate* I.22, Augustine later points out in *De Trinitate* II.4 that John 7:16 could equally well be explained using the origin rule.

¹⁰⁵ *DeT* II.3.

¹⁰⁶ *DeT* II.3.

¹⁰⁷ *DeT* II.3. See too the earlier statement in *DeT* II.3 that there are passages '...which mark him neither as less nor as equal, but only intimate that he is from the Father [*de Patre*]...'

¹⁰⁸ So also E. Hendricx 1955:42 '...il reste donc que l'égalité du Fils est d'ordre substantiel...'

¹⁰⁹ Compare the insistence of *De Fide et Symbolo* 16 that the Persons are equal in nature, and the late response to Maximinus that origin and equality are distinct questions *Ans Max* II.xviii.3.

¹¹⁰ *DeT* I.14.

Conversely, John 5:26 is at one point allocated to the *forma dei* rule,¹¹¹ but subsequently produced as an example of the origin rule.¹¹² Again, a flagship text for ‘Arians’/Homoians, John 6:38, falls under the *forma servi* rule,¹¹³ only to be explained in terms of origin in the later works against Maximinus.¹¹⁴

Therefore both *forma dei* and *forma servi* texts can, occasionally, be explained under the origin rule. The origin rule can cover texts invoked to show equality and also texts invoked to show inferiority. This seeming paradox invites closer focus on the nature of the relation that the origin rule describes, that the Son is ‘God from God.’¹¹⁵

7.6. Inseparability

De Trinitate I.7 disclosed two conceptual pairs, first, inseparability and ^{second,} distinction and eternal relation and temporal action. It now falls to examine Augustine’s trinitarian theology using this conceptual vocabulary. *De Trinitate* I.7 indicates that inseparability bites at the level both of action and of relations. Inseparability at the level of action will be discussed first.

7.6.1. Inseparable action

Inseparable action is no arbitrary choice of Augustine’s for describing triune activity in the world. He contends, rightly, as we have seen, that it is accepted by the

¹¹¹ *DeT.* I.22.

¹¹² *DeT* II.3.

¹¹³ *DeT.* I.22.

¹¹⁴ *Ans Max* II.xx.3. This is not because Augustine had renounced the *forma servi* rule. See *Ans Max* I.v and II.xiv.8.

¹¹⁵ *DeT* II.2. ‘...Deum de Deo...’

Catholic faith, part of the church's tradition in the best sense,¹¹⁶ but more importantly it is scriptural. It is difficult to over-stress how important John 5:19ff is to him as undergirding this.¹¹⁷ Attention especially focuses on John 5:19 itself and it is worth now comparing Augustine's Latin with the Greek. Augustine fastens on two phrases (which he quotes separately):¹¹⁸

(a) *non potest Filius a se facere quidquam nisi quod viderit Patrem facientem*

for

οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὐδεν ἔαν μή τι βλέπῃ τὸν πατέρα
ποιοῦντα

and

(b) *Quaecumque...Pater facit, haec eadem et Filius facit similiter*

for

ἃ γὰρ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ποιῇ, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ.

The first phrase with its reference to 'seeing' leads us, says Augustine, to consider the Son's origin.¹¹⁹ He reasons that this cannot refer to physical seeing. Hilary anticipated him in this.¹²⁰ Had the Father created anything independently so that the Son could watch, the Son would not have been creator of all. Physical seeing here would be incompatible with the Son's creation of all.¹²¹ This argument proceeds on important lines: it tends to preclude the Father working independently, even on similar projects. This will be pursued in the exposition of the second phrase.

¹¹⁶ *Tractate 20.3: Catholica autem fides habet, quod Patris et Filii opera non sunt separabilia.*

¹¹⁷ As well as the relatively extensive discussion of *DeT* II.3, *Sermons* 126 and 127 and *Tractates* 18-23 deal with it.

¹¹⁸ In *DeT* II.3.

¹¹⁹ *DeT*.II.3.

¹²⁰ Hilary *DeT* VII.17,18.

¹²¹ See *Tractate* 18.5. *Sermon* 126.9 follows essentially these lines.

Having excluded physical seeing and imitation by the Son, Augustine instead relates seeing to the Son's origin, to being born of the Father. Behind the phrase lies the view:

... that the work of the Father and the Son is indivisible [*inseparabilis*¹²² *est operatio*], and yet the Son's working is from the Father just as he himself is from the Father; and the way in which the Son sees the Father is simply by being the Son. For him, being from the Father, that is being born of the Father, is not something different from seeing the Father; nor is seeing him working something different from his working equally; and the reason he does not work of himself is that he does not (so to put it) be of himself [*sed ideo non a se*¹²³ *quia non est a se*] ...¹²⁴

Augustine's analysis makes good contextual sense. In John 5:19ff, Jesus is explaining why his conduct and statements are not blasphemous. Augustine's explanation excludes Jesus as an independently existing deity,¹²⁵ working independently. He does not work independently, because his life is not a life separate from the Father, but 'from' the Father: *deus de deo*. Augustine's explanation means that Jesus answers the charges.

Further, the idea that the Son cannot *a se facere quidquam* is taken as relating to inseparable operation. Operation is inseparable in that the Son does not work without the Father.¹²⁶ Moreover, the Son's temporal working is placed in parallel with his eternal relationship with the Father. As related in eternity, so the Son operates on earth. Possibly this correlation of eternal relation and temporal action may ultimately fail, but Augustine clearly asserts economic and immanent considerations are connected, not severed.

¹²² For reasons developed later, translating *inseparabilis* by 'indivisible' can be unfortunate.

¹²³ Referring to the phrase *non potest Filius a se facere*.

¹²⁴ *DeTII.3*. Compare *Tractate* 21.2: '...but in the Son Himself [the Father] showeth Him what He doeth.'

¹²⁵ Note *Tractate* 19.12 carefully asserts there are not two lives such as to constitute two gods.

¹²⁶ Using the terms of *Tractate* 18.6 on John 5:19. Cf. Appold 1976:281.

Finally, one might ask whether Augustine has over-read John's phrase. Some modern scholarship relates the phrase to a parable or proverb of a father's loving demonstration of his work to his son.¹²⁷ However, Ridderbos comments that 5:20b refers to the specific Son and Father,¹²⁸ so that a parabolic reference in 5:20a is contextually awkward. Further, 'seeing' and 'hearing' within the Gospel tend to refer to the relation that the Son has with the Father: what the Son 'sees' in heaven belongs to the range of ideas stressing the Son's uniqueness in his relation to the Father.¹²⁹ This brings one back to the question of what kind of Son he is.

With the second phrase, *Quaecumque...Pater facit, haec eadem et Filius facit similiter*, Augustine strikingly emphasises *eadem*, so that '... the works of the Father and the Son are the same works', not the Father doing some works while the Son does others.¹³⁰ Nor does the Son simply perform essentially similar works, for he is not 'like a painter copying pictures'.¹³¹ Instead inseparable operation means Father and Son 'do' numerically identical actions, not just generically similar actions. Again, Hilary had earlier made this point,¹³² but less frequently and emphatically. Inseparable operation is less central to him.

Augustine's Latin version clearly commits him to this interpretation,¹³³ but it is perhaps less obvious in the Greek. A key word in the phrase ἃ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ποιεῖ, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ is ταῦτα. Does this mean 'these things' from οὗτος ('this') or 'the same things' from αὐτός ('the same')? If the latter, then

¹²⁷ E.g. Brown 1971 I.218.

¹²⁸ 1997:191f.

¹²⁹ Note here John 1:18 - no-one has 'seen' God and John 3:11 to the effect that Jesus testifies of what he has 'seen'.

¹³⁰ *Tractates* 18.8, 20.3.

¹³¹ *De T* II.3.

Augustine's translation is, of course, correct. Jerome, however, construes ταῦτα as 'these things'.¹³⁴

However, even taking ταῦτα as 'these things', Augustine's substantial exegetical conclusions are not necessarily proved wrong.¹³⁵ For ταῦτα functions pronominally here, referring back to ἃ ... ἃν ἐκεῖνος ποιῇ. It should, strictly, have the same scope. Strictly, therefore, both clauses, ἃ γὰρ ἃν ἐκεῖνος ποιῇ, and ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ, have the same reference, co-ordinated by the demonstrative pronoun.¹³⁶ That suggests that the Father and the Son do numerically identical actions, not just actions of the same genus. Augustine would be right, after all.

Various considerations support this. Semantically, if John 5:19 were saying Father and Son did similar but not numerically identical actions, then a term is available to make that perfectly clear, τοιαῦτα from τοιοῦτος, 'such'. This is not employed.¹³⁷ Further, the Gospel's overall theology does join Jesus' works to the Father. Indeed, Ridderbos reaches a similar view to Augustine: the Father 'makes himself present in all that the Son does.'¹³⁸ In general terms, Jesus' works are characterised as 'works of my Father',¹³⁹ in that they are works the Father gives him

¹³² Hilary *DeT* VII.17, 18.

¹³³ Hilary's Latin text is substantially the same.

¹³⁴ *quaecumque enim ille fecerit haec et Filius similiter facit*. Later accenting supports this since John 5:19 is accented as ταῦτα, the neuter plural of οὗτος, not ταῦτά, the neuter plural of αὐτός.

¹³⁵ Even if he did think the form was 'the same things'.

¹³⁶ The point that ταῦτα has the same scope as ἃ ... ἃν is not affected by the fact that ἃ ... ἃν is indefinite.

¹³⁷ No textual variants seem relevant.

¹³⁸ Ridderbos 1997:193. Barrett 1978:216 speaks of the Son's actions always being 'a reflection of God's own work.' This seems less strong than Ridderbos or Augustine, and Barrett does not deal in depth with the semantics of John 5:19.

¹³⁹ John 10:37.

to do,¹⁴⁰ and in which the Father is involved,¹⁴¹ and which, finally, Jesus attributes directly to the Father in John 14:10,¹⁴² for the Father is in the Son.¹⁴³ This latter statement, of course, returns one to the category of relation: if the Father is in the Son, in what sense could the Son's actions be discrete and separate from the Father?

Hence, for Augustine John 5:19ff warrants inseparable operation, in which Father and Son are involved (to attempt to put it neutrally) in numerically identical actions. There are no works 'done by the Father without the Son, or by the Son without the Father.'¹⁴⁴

However, such inseparable operation seems costly. Augustine readily acknowledges it provokes questions,¹⁴⁵ notably that it possibly implies that the Father too becomes incarnate.¹⁴⁶ Inevitably one wonders why the principle is so important - what does it protect? Perhaps most basically, inseparable operation preserves the integrity of divine action. This is important in several respects, first, with regard to monotheism and creation. While explaining inseparable operation, Augustine refers to the Father and Son creating together in one inseparable operation.¹⁴⁷ Indeed he uses creation in his exposition of John 5:19ff.¹⁴⁸ This, though, is significant because of Augustine's views about creation.

¹⁴⁰ John 5:36.

¹⁴¹ The healing of the man born blind is seen to be the work both of Jesus and the God who hears him.

¹⁴² '...the Father...works..'

¹⁴³ John 14:11.

¹⁴⁴ *Tractate* 18.6.

¹⁴⁵ *DeT* I.8.

¹⁴⁶ See *Letter* 11 to Nebridius where just this is raised.

¹⁴⁷ *DeT* I.12.

¹⁴⁸ *DeT* II.3, *Tractate* 18.5. and *Sermon* 126.9.

Augustine envisages a dichotomy between creator and created. A being is one or the other.¹⁴⁹ It is, though, by being creator that one is sovereign over what one creates.¹⁵⁰ Creating, then, is a decisive mark of deity.¹⁵¹ This implies that were there several discrete creative acts by discrete creators, no one creator would be lord of all. For each one, there would be something he had not created. There will be no being who is *omnipotens* in the sense of powerful over all, at least not without further considerations.¹⁵²

Therefore inseparable action preserves a ‘cosmological monism’¹⁵³ in which the triune God (and the Father in particular) has a monarchy, not a polyarchy.¹⁵⁴ Since creation is one operation, and since only the creator is worthy of worship,¹⁵⁵ it follows that inseparable operation in creation founds monolatry, the worship of the triune God alone, in which each Person is worthy of worship. Thus, inseparable operation allows Augustine to contend the triune God alone creates, and alone is worthy of worship.

Conversely, Augustine gives indications that separable divine operations are polytheistic. His treatment of Manichaeism illustrates this. Augustine accuses Faustus of polytheism,¹⁵⁶ despite Faustus’ earlier assertion that Manichaeans worship one deity under a ‘threefold appellation’¹⁵⁷ Now, the charge of polytheism is most

¹⁴⁹ *DeT* I.9. So too with Athanasius. Ayres 2002:450 rightly says Nicene theology held to an absolute distinction between creator and created.

¹⁵⁰ *De Fide et Symbolo* 2.

¹⁵¹ *Against Faustus* 21.4.

¹⁵² So too G. Heidl 2001:175.

¹⁵³ S. Macdonald 2001:84.

¹⁵⁴ Compare Augustine’s remarks in *Sermon* 126.10 that there is one majesty given the one operation of the Trinity.

¹⁵⁵ *De Civitate Dei* (hereafter *DCD*) VII.27.

¹⁵⁶ *Reply to Faustus* 20.5.

¹⁵⁷ *Reply to Faustus* 20.2.

obviously true in relation to the ‘principle’ *Hyle*. Since *Hyle* does what only a god can, it must be called god.¹⁵⁸ However, Augustine’s criticism is wider. He also criticises Manichaean conceptions of trinitarian operation. In discussing the idea that God is light, he comments:

This light is one divine being, in an inseparable triune existence; and yet, without supposing any assumption of bodily form, you assign to separate places parts of the immaterial, spiritual and unchangeable substance.¹⁵⁹

His primary concern is the Manichaean separation of the Son’s attributes,¹⁶⁰ but a subsidiary theme is the allocation of the Persons to different places or spheres of activity and the way this separates what is properly inseparable. The upshot is that Manichaeans resemble pagans (i.e. polytheists) ‘in assigning to your gods different powers, and functions and employments’.¹⁶¹ In their mythology ‘They are all distinct persons.’¹⁶² Hence, inseparable operation both fits with monotheistic emphases on a single creation whose triune creator is alone worthy of worship and also guards against polytheistic implications arising from separable action. Harnack’s comment that Augustine carries out monotheism ‘strictly and thoroughly’ is here well-taken.¹⁶³

Inseparable operation also preserves the integrity of divine action in other respects. Augustine turns to salvation itself as the joint action of the Trinity.¹⁶⁴ This follows naturally from seeing each Person as worthy of worship through their inseparable operation of creation. The one majesty of the creator must act inseparably

¹⁵⁸ *Reply to Faustus* 21.4.

¹⁵⁹ *Reply to Faustus* 20.7.

¹⁶⁰ See *Reply to Faustus* 20.8.

¹⁶¹ *Reply to Faustus* 20.10. Compare Leftow’s comment that divine persons with distinct spheres of activity sounds like an ‘Olympian’ (i.e. polytheistic) model of divine action: Leftow 1999:237.

¹⁶² *Reply to Faustus* 20.12.

¹⁶³ Harnack 1898 V:4.

¹⁶⁴ *DeT* XIII.15.

in righting the creation. Indeed, without inseparable action in redemption, the question arises whether it is perfected.

A further area is revelation. This may seem unexpected, since Augustine has incurred substantial criticism over revelation.¹⁶⁵ However, Barnes argues that it is inseparable operation that allows the divine unity to be expressed.¹⁶⁶ Without inseparable operation, how does one know that the Father is indeed in the Son? In the background here is the question of how actions might reveal not just a relationship which is personal and harmonious, but a perichoretic personal relationship. Indeed there is a further question whether giving the information that a perichoretic relationship exists is the same as revealing it by instantiating it to onlookers. This, though, starts to move towards the inseparability of persons. Is this justified? This brings us to the theological basis for Augustine's inseparable operation.

At various points Augustine suggests a rationale for inseparable operation. As indicated earlier, *De Trinitate* I.7 links inseparable operation in the temporal sphere with persons whose eternal relations are inseparable.¹⁶⁷ A similar movement emerges in *Letter* 11 to Nebridius. Questioned about inseparable operations, Augustine outlines an inseparable union which inevitably produces inseparable operation.¹⁶⁸ The overall train of thought comes out perhaps most clearly thus:

...Patris et Filii opera inseparabilia sunt. Quod est quod dixi? Quomodo ipse Pater et Filius inseparabiles sunt, sic et opera Patris et Filii inseparabilia

¹⁶⁵ E.g. La Cugna 1991:97 points precisely to works *ad extra* as severing the Persons from the economy.

¹⁶⁶ M.R.Barnes 1999a:158.

¹⁶⁷ *quamvis Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus sicut inseparabiles sunt, ita inseparabiliter operentur.* The point is the parallel between *sicut* and *ita*.

¹⁶⁸ *Letter* 11.2 to Nebridius.

sunt.¹⁶⁹ *Quomodo Pater et Filius inseparabiles sunt? Quia ipse dixit: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Quia Pater et Filius non sunt duo dii, sed unus Deus.*¹⁷⁰

The works, then, are inseparable, because the Persons are inseparable, an inseparability drawn from monotheism (again recalling Harnack's comment on Augustine's vigorous monotheism)¹⁷¹ and John 10:30. Inquiry therefore shifts to the inseparability of the Persons.

7.6.2. Inseparable Persons

The passages cited above demonstrate Augustine's commitment to the Persons' inseparability,¹⁷² associated with monotheism and with that key text for Nicene trinitarian monotheism, John 10:30.¹⁷³ To that extent, Augustine's inseparability of Persons possibly correlates with perichoretic indwelling and monotheism in Athanasius and the 'in' terminology of Hilary. The final instruction of *Tractate 20* re-inforces this:

*Intellegite ergo, fratres carissimi, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum inseparabiliter coharere, Trinitatem hanc unum Deum, et omnia opera unius Dei haec esse Patris, haec esse Filii, haec esse Spiritus Sancti.*¹⁷⁴

After all, *cohaerere* and its cognate *adhaerere* are used in *De Trinitate* to describe personal relations which conduce to 'one-ness.'¹⁷⁵

The Persons are inseparable at least in that one cannot properly talk of the Persons in individual isolation:¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Structurally similar to the expression of *DeT* I.7.

¹⁷⁰ *Tractate* 20.3. on John 5:19.

¹⁷¹ Harnack vol. 5 1898:4.

¹⁷² This notion is widespread in Augustine's works: *DCD* XI.24 and 29; *Reply to Faustus* 20.8; *Confessions* XIII.xi.12, as well as more obvious places such as *DeT* I.7, *Ans Max* II.x.1, *Sermons* 118.2 and 152, *Tractate* 20.3 etc.

¹⁷³ *Tractate* 20.3.

¹⁷⁴ *Tractate* 20.13.

¹⁷⁵ *DeT* VI.6 Augustine speaks of Father and Son alike being God, but one God, not two and adds *ita enim sibi cohaerent*. *DeT* VI.9. uses *adhaerere*.

Quamquam non invenitur quomodo dici possit aut Pater solus, aut Filius solus cum semper atque inseparabiliter, et ille cum Filio sit et ille cum Patre, non ut ambo sint Pater aut ambo Filius, sed quia semper in invicem¹⁷⁷ neuter solus.¹⁷⁸

One can therefore paraphrase inseparability as meaning that the Persons are always with each other. The relations are eternal and unchangeable - they cannot be lost.¹⁷⁹ Augustine's language therefore illustrates the connection between inseparable persons and inseparable actions. The Persons never *are* without each other, so naturally they never *act* without each other.

We must now return to the 'Arian'/Homoian argument that asserts any predication about God is predicated 'substance-wise' and that suggests that the Father and Son are of different substances because one is ingenerate, the other generate.¹⁸⁰

Augustine answers like this. He accepts God cannot be 'modified in any way'.¹⁸¹ A 'modification' here is something that can be lost from the thing it modifies,¹⁸² but whose loss leaves the thing modified essentially the same, intact. God, however, has or is nothing that can be changed or lost.¹⁸³ This, then, is what Augustine wishes to defend, that nothing can be lost or changed in God.

Augustine can now challenge the false dichotomy in the 'Arian'/Homoian argument. They assumed all predicates were stated either 'modification-wise' or 'substance-wise'. Any predicate that was not a modification must therefore be of substance. Augustine, however, argues for a third category of predication, things that

¹⁷⁶ Again, strongly reminiscent of Hilary.

¹⁷⁷ A term with perichoretic associations. Compare *DeT* VI.12. but also significant in relative or relational propositions. *DeT* V.6, 12, 15; and VII.2,3,7,11 and 12.

¹⁷⁸ *DeT* VI.9.

¹⁷⁹ *DeT* V.6.

¹⁸⁰ *DeT* V.4.

¹⁸¹ *DeT* V.3. God admits no *mutatio*.

¹⁸² *DeT* V.5. *Accidens autem dici, non solet nisi quod aliqua mutatione eius rei cui accidit amitti potest.*

are said ‘with reference to something else’¹⁸⁴ or relatively. For Augustine, relational predication in God is no modification precisely because it is eternal and unchangeable.¹⁸⁵ It cannot be lost. Hence he preserves the key value, that nothing changeable be predicated of God. The ‘Arian’/Homoian objection therefore fails.

Augustine’s argument merits reflection. First, it aims to ensure relational predication is distinguished from substantial predication. If it is not, then personal distinctions entail difference of substance and the objection succeeds. This bears strongly on the criticism that Augustine equates person with substance.¹⁸⁶ Were that so, he would admit the objection by the back door, but the refutation of the objection is a major structural component in *De Trinitate*, which suggests this would be very far from his intention.

Secondly, it is important to see what this account of relational predication requires. Two conditions must be satisfied. First, that there be ‘another’: for relational predications are made *ad alterutrum*.¹⁸⁷ Distinction is presupposed. The second condition relates to what that other must be: eternal and unchangeable. Otherwise, the relation in which it partakes will also be modifiable. Doubtless for such reasons Augustine slips into discussing the eternity of the Persons within the relation.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ *DeT* V.5. *Nihil itaque accidens in Deo, quia nihil mutabile aut amissibile.*

¹⁸⁴ *DeT* V.6. ‘with reference to something else’ is Hill’s translation of *ad aliquid* (Hill 1991). Augustine also speaks of predications *secundum relativum*, balancing *secundum accidens* and *secundum substantiam*.

¹⁸⁵ *DeT* V.6.

¹⁸⁶ E.g. La Cugna 1991:88.

¹⁸⁷ *DeT* V.6.

¹⁸⁸ *DeT* V.6.

Thirdly, while this account of relations requires genuine distinction, it has not yet progressed to individual particularity or uniqueness.¹⁸⁹ Whether Augustine maintains genuine distinction without affirming individual particularity or uniqueness will be addressed later.

Fourthly, obviously Augustine provides his accounts of relational predication because he accepts that things cannot be predicated of God ‘modification-wise’.¹⁹⁰ The basis for this needs examination,¹⁹¹ and raises Augustine’s doctrine of unchangeability more generally.

It will be recalled that Augustine envisages that things are either created or uncreated.¹⁹² Everything other than the triune God is created by him. This gives rise to three related concepts. First, creation of all from nothing suggests God’s omnipotence.¹⁹³ For all created things depend on his will, while the uncreated, which alone truly ‘is’, depends on nothing.¹⁹⁴

Secondly, this in turn implies that the creature external to God cannot subject him to necessity. This seems to be the heart-beat of divine unchangeability or immutability in Augustine.¹⁹⁵ Divine unchangeability asserts, not a static and unmoving God, but one who cannot be subjected or coerced.

¹⁸⁹ Another criticism of the Augustinian account of Persons. E.g. Gunton 1997:xxiv.

¹⁹⁰ *DeT* V.3.

¹⁹¹ Obviously an alternative response to the ‘Arian’/Homoian argument would be to assert the possibility of predicating things of God ‘modification-wise’.

¹⁹² *DeT* I.9.

¹⁹³ N. Torchia 1997:267.

¹⁹⁴ Macdonald 2001:83.

¹⁹⁵ Thus *DCD* VIII.5 puts immutability in terms of not being changed by an external object. *Against Fortunatus* Day 1.6, 7, 11 suggests God suffers no necessity. Compare *Confessions* VII.iv.6.

Thirdly, being uncreated implies simplicity. Created things are not simple, and their lack of simplicity means they are changeable.¹⁹⁶ Simplicity is extensively discussed in *De Civitate Dei* XI.10. Here Augustine argues that God's triunity does not deny simplicity. Initially this seems odd, for the passage also states that the Father 'has' (*habet*) the Son, not 'is' (*est*) the Son. Yet the same passage speaks of something being simple in the sense that it 'is' rather than 'has' something. The resolution lies in that simplicity is denied where one may lose what one 'has'.¹⁹⁷ Yet the Father so 'has' the Son, and vice versa, that the other cannot be lost. The relation must be unchanging and is 'simple' in that sense.

Simplicity in Augustine is, then, closely tied to unchangeability, and both arise from God's uncreatedness. Simplicity and unchangeability govern our understanding of God so that we predicate nothing of him 'modification-wise'. Otherwise, by having something he could lose, the door is opened to change and to composition. Augustine's account of predications of relation and substance thus form part of an integrated description of an uncreated God.

In practice, Augustine has arrived at a position not dissimilar to Athanasius. Athanasius too made much of the simplicity and unchangeable nature of God, who was *adiairetos*, yet with personal differentiation, and, like Augustine, this was largely drawn from the idea that God was uncreated.

¹⁹⁶ *DCD* XI.10. See too *DeT* VI.8.

¹⁹⁷ *DCD* XI.10: *possit amittere*.

7.7. Inseparability and Distinction

It was noted earlier that inseparability and distinction are not mutually exclusive in Augustine. One question about Augustine is whether inseparability in fact subsumes distinction. Within Augustine's conceptual vocabulary, this could occur either at the level of personal relations or of temporal actions. We move now to consider the subsuming of distinctions in each field.

7.7.1. Inseparability Subsuming Distinction of Actions

If the temporal actions of the triune God become personally indistinguishable, then it becomes highly problematic to assert that they reveal a triune God.¹⁹⁸ Hill remarks that if external actions are indistinguishable, our relation as human creatures is simply, undifferentiatedly, to 'God'.¹⁹⁹ As such, Hill suggests, the Trinity itself becomes irrelevant. Revelation is attenuated, producing a corresponding need to resort to natural theological methods.²⁰⁰ Further, since the undifferentiated action renders access to the distinction of Persons problematic, personal distinction, looks insignificant even though it is asserted. Moreover such personal distinction looks increasingly to be the result of speculation not revelation. Personal distinction could become marginalised, possibly entailing that personal distinction and particularity are trivialised, just as Zizioulas and others lament.²⁰¹

For Plantinga this derives from emphasising God's simplicity far beyond scriptural warrant.²⁰² This requires scrutiny, although, as noted above, simplicity is

¹⁹⁸ See for instance the remarks of La Cugna 1991:99 that the Persons seem irrelevant in the economy.

¹⁹⁹ Hill 1985:95f.

²⁰⁰ One recalls the misgivings of Jenson 1982:117 and La Cugna 1991:101 in this respect.

²⁰¹ Zizioulas 1991.

²⁰² Plantinga 1991:316.

not exclusive to Augustine.²⁰³ If simplicity itself creates the problem, then this problem should be present in other theologies than Augustine's.

It is intriguing and important to observe that this particular problem is not 'modalist'.²⁰⁴ Traditional modalism asserted, in effect, threeness at the temporal level masking oneness at the immanent. Instead, the problem here is that three-foldness is so indistinguishable within the triune God's single inseparable action that one cannot move to the distinct Persons existing in eternity. One-ness at the temporal level masks an immanent three-ness. While this is doubtless undesirable, the description 'modalist' is misplaced.

Nor would it be modalism were one to assert that in Augustine inseparability subsumes the distinction of Persons. In that case inseparable, indistinguishable temporal operation leads one quite accurately (within the framework) to inseparable, indistinguishable personal relations immanently. This unites the economic and the immanent.²⁰⁵ This would unquestionably be disastrous,²⁰⁶ but, again, would not be 'modalism'.

Harnack's charge, then, pays too little attention to the very thing that Augustine so emphasised: inseparable temporal operation. Harnack's charge could only be preserved either by broadening the definition of 'modalism' or by asserting that the actions are distinguishable but the Persons are not. To the possibility of indistinguishable persons attention now turns.

²⁰³ Hill 1985:55 and 58 remarks that Arians as well as Athanasius held this.

²⁰⁴ This is the traditional accusation of Harnack 1898 IV:130 n. 1.

²⁰⁵ Contra e.g. Jenson 1982:116.

²⁰⁶ Not least for the kinds of reasons Zizioulas 1991 outlines.

7.7.2. *Inseparability Subsuming Distinction of Persons*

If the Persons are so inseparable as to be indistinguishable, then clearly undesirable consequences follow. Relations to God become imperilled precisely because one asks ‘who’ one relates to. Augustine stressed the need to worship the creator and famously posed the question how one could love one whom one did not know.²⁰⁷ If the persons are ultimately indistinguishable, then even partial knowledge seems difficult. Furthermore, God’s immanent relations are apparently transformed from love of other to love of self, thereby yielding a reflexive, even narcissistic, God.²⁰⁸ Further, personal relations more generally risk devaluation, for there is no ultimate personhood in God, and personal knowledge of others more generally seems secondary rather than primary. Indeed, if the reflexive love of God becomes the exemplar, then human relations even risk being seen as a means by which one loves oneself, not God or one’s neighbour.

It is, of course, such a collapse of the personal into the substantial that has been associated with Augustine.²⁰⁹ Interestingly this collapse of personal distinction is linked with simplicity,²¹⁰ also cited as the culprit for the collapse of inseparable actions into indistinguishable actions. The role of simplicity is thus crucial, again highlighting the importance of the issue of monotheism in Augustine.

Thus, whether distinction collapses at the level of temporal action or immanent personal relation, the consequences are of the utmost seriousness. It is

²⁰⁷ *DeT* VIII.6.

²⁰⁸ La Cugna 1991:103.

²⁰⁹ E.g. La Cugna 1991:88.

²¹⁰ So Harnack 1898 vol IV:129 and Jenson 1982:119.

therefore necessary to see whether in fact inseparability does subsume distinction. The first area requiring investigation is that of immanent personal relation. This priority follows from Augustine's grounding of inseparable operation in inseparable immanent relations.²¹¹ So, if the Persons are indistinguishable, it is hard to see how their operation could be otherwise.

7.8. Does Inseparability Subsume Distinction at the Level of Person?

7.8.1. *The significance of De Trinitate VII.11*

The most obvious reason for thinking that inseparability subsumes distinct personal relations is that Augustine himself apparently says so. Several critics cite *De Trinitate* VII.11 to this effect.²¹² La Cugna draws particular attention²¹³ to the passage and produces one of the more extensive quotations from it, as follows:

[I]n God to be is not one thing, and to be a person another thing, but it is wholly and entirely one and the same thing. *When we say the person of the Father, we mean nothing else than the substance of the Father.* Therefore, as the substance of the Father is the Father himself, not insofar as He is the Father but insofar as He is, so too the person of the Father is nothing else than the Father Himself. *For He is called a person in respect to himself, not in relation to the Son or to the Holy Spirit, just as He is called in respect to Himself, God, great, good, just, and other similar terms*²¹⁴

In fact, La Cugna omits a substantial part without indicating she has done so. Following the first sentence in La Cugna's version, Augustine introduces some significant argument.²¹⁵ Initial reading, though, of La Cugna's abridged version apparently substantiates her contention that Augustine 'equates person with substance'.²¹⁶ If so, then this must be considered with his argument that any predicates of substance must be applied to each Person. The combined position

²¹¹ *Tractate* 20.3.

²¹² E.g. La Cugna 1991:88, Plantinga 1988:46, 1991:308 fn. 20, Gunton 1997:42.

²¹³ She describes it as 'difficult' (La Cugna 1991:89). O. Du Roy describes it as a place of '*tourment*'. His interpretation is contestable, his description is not.

²¹⁴ La Cugna 1991:88f. Her emphasis.

²¹⁵ See below.

apparently entails that what may be predicated of the Father as a person, can equally be predicated of Son and Spirit. This would eradicate, not necessarily personhood, but certainly personal particularity. La Cugna recognises that earlier in *De Trinitate* Augustine did uphold personal distinction and particularity,²¹⁷ but sees this as an irreconcilable inconsistency within *De Trinitate*.²¹⁸

Of course, it is possible that Augustine simply contradicts himself. However, such inconsistency on such a question from such a man is perhaps not to be accepted casually. *De Trinitate* VII.11 therefore merits closer inspection.

7.8.2. The Broader Context

Concerning the broader context of VII.11, Augustine has stated he is defending a Faith which stipulates that the Father is not the Son.²¹⁹ Furthermore, more immediately, Books V-VII form an argument which started at *De Trinitate* V.4 by stating the ‘Arian’/Homoian objection that anything said of God is said ‘substance-wise’. In answering that, Augustine accepts that, minimally, Father and Son differ in that one is ingenerate, the other generate.²²⁰ If he consistently thought that the Persons were, ultimately, indistinguishable, he could not accept that initial ‘Arian’/Homoian point as he does. Instead, as outlined above, his argument relies on some things being true of the Persons (that one is Father, another Son) precisely because there is an eternally irreducible other.²²¹ Without such another in the relative statements, his defence to the ‘Arian’/Homoian charge fails. Thus if one holds that

²¹⁶ La Cugna 1991:89.

²¹⁷ Notably in *DeT* V.

²¹⁸ La Cugna 1991:89.

²¹⁹ *DeT* I.7.

²²⁰ *DeT* V.4.

²²¹ *DeT* V.5 and 6. Compare Ayres 2000a:56, 72.

Augustine ‘equates person with substance’,²²² then not merely has he been inconsistent, but his broader project in Books V-VII founders. Doubtless, this is possible, but it illuminates the magnitude of the inconsistency La Cugna suggests.

7.8.3. *The Immediate Context of Book VII - ‘Persons’*

Within the closer context of Book VII itself, VII.1-6 clearly pursue one aspect of predication about the Persons. The presenting issue is raised by 1 Corinthians 1:24 which describes Christ as the Wisdom of God. Does this mean that God is only wise with the wisdom of Christ? Such an approach opens the door to ‘Arian’/Homoian arguments that the Son was not truly *homoousios* - for ‘wisdom’ would be differently predicated for Father and Son. Augustine concludes that one may say both are alike wise, but not both are alike begotten or unbegotten, because these are terms of relationship.²²³ This closely recalls Athanasius’ statement that the Son is all the Father is, except Father. Significantly, though, Augustine pursues distinction at the relative level in Book VII itself, not just in earlier material.

Book VII.7 introduces a new but related topic, the terminology in which these things are described, which differs between Greek and Latin theologians. This is not insignificant since VII.11 itself opens by referring to this difference. That hints that VII.11 belongs to this section of argument.²²⁴ Interestingly, what Augustine is concerned to safeguard is that there are three. He comments:

That there are three is declared by the true faith, when it says that the Father is not the Son, and the Holy Spirit which is the gift of God is neither the Father nor the Son.²²⁵

²²² La Cugna 1991:89.

²²³ *DeT* VII.6.

²²⁴ Evidently Hill’s view too since he brackets VII.7-11 as ‘chapter 4’ of his 1991 translation of Book VII.

²²⁵ *DeT* VII.7.

This shows that, at the beginning of the section to which VII.11 apparently belongs, Augustine still explicitly holds that the persons do not reduce to each other, which necessarily entails they do not each reduce to the one substance. This renders the inconsistency thesis increasingly problematic. Instead, Augustine is concerned with ‘three what?’²²⁶ In asking this, Augustine is enquiring about what is held in common:

So Father and Son and Holy Spirit being three, we ask three what, meaning what do they have in common? They do not have in common what is meant by Father, so that they are three fathers to each other, as friends who are so called with reference to each other can be called three friends which they are toward each other....If three persons, then what is meant by person is common to all three.²²⁷

Augustine writes here both about the irreducibility of the individual Persons (the Father is not the Son and so forth), but he also refers to another issue: not simply about distinctions, but about what the distinct Father, Son and Spirit are in common. They are called in common ‘Persons’.

However, Augustine reasons, the normal use of ‘person’ presents difficulties. It can only be a generic name, not a species-name, because it covers things of a different nature. After all, it encompasses, not just the divine persons, but also human persons, who are clearly of a different nature.²²⁸ Therefore ‘person’ does not precisely specify what the Father, Son and Spirit are in common.

VII.8-9 are apparently devoted to showing how complex the terminological discussion is, pointing out that the plural language about ‘person’ (which is something the distinct Father, Son and Spirit are) could equally be invoked to permit

²²⁶ *quid tria sint.*

²²⁷ *DeT VII.7. Pater ergo et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus quoniam tres sunt, quid tres sint quaeramus, quid commune habeant. Non enim commune illis est id quod Pater est ut invicem sibi sint patres; sicut amici, cum relative ad alterutrum dicantur, possunt dici tres amici quod invicem sibi sunt.... Quid igitur tres? Si enim tres Personae, commune est eis id quod persona est.*

²²⁸ *DeT VII.7.*

talk of three Gods. Conversely the singular language about God could be invoked to say God is one person.²²⁹ Given these terminological difficulties, Augustine returns to the ideas the terms aim to defend. The purpose is to avoid anything that could be taken as ‘diversity in that supreme and ultimate equality’²³⁰ and also anything that led to ‘any idea of singleness’.²³¹ Thus, importantly, Augustine explicitly re-affirms his repudiation of Sabellianism here, seeing it as denying that the Son is not the same as the Father and so on.

Book VII.9-10 continues with terminological questions, broaching the term ‘substance’. This is significant partly, of course, because the Latin *substantia* etymologically corresponds with the Greek *hypostasis*, which had been used to denote ‘three-ness’. Augustine is at least aware of these different formulae,²³² but shows no sense that the Greeks differ from him in theological substance.²³³ He does argue, however, that *substantia*’s normal associations (the underlying thing to which modifications or accidents attach) are inappropriate for God. When used by extension, although ‘improperly’, it defends what God is by reference to himself, not by way of relationship.²³⁴

Therefore, Augustine gives no indication before the start of VII.11 that he allows the inseparability of persons to subsume personal distinction so that the idea of

²²⁹ *DeT* VII.8.

²³⁰ *DeT* VII.9. *ne intellegeretur in illa summa aequalitate ulla diversitas.*

²³¹ *DeT* VII.9. *dixit substantias sive personas,...sed singularitatem noluit ut non solum ibi unitas intellegatur.*

²³² *DeT* VII.7.

²³³ *a nostris Graecis* sounds friendly. Compare Hill’s translation ‘our Greek colleagues’ (Hill 1991).

²³⁴ *DeT* VII.10.

person is equated with that of substance. Instead, he insists that the Father is not the Son and so on.²³⁵ The issue is the terminology with which to do this.

7.8.4. *The Substance of De Trinitate VII.11.*

The passage starts:

Perhaps then it is more correct to say three persons than three substances. But we must inquire further into this, in case it looks like special pleading for our own usage against that of the Greeks.

Two points arise. First, the passage is closely joined with what precedes. The reference to Greek and Latin usage brackets what follows with the discussion of usage starting in VII.7 where the apparently different usages of '*substance*'/'*hypostasis*' were set out.

This suggests, secondly, that Augustine is not discussing here the 'thing' to which reference is being made, but the terms for making the reference and their comparative adequacy. He is not, then, discussing the subsuming of persons into substantial one-ness. He has by this time consistently asserted that the aim is to defend orthodox belief against tendencies to 'diversity' or 'singleness'.²³⁶

Augustine thinks he has by this point shown the inadequacy of 'substance', given its etymology and ordinary use.²³⁷ Clearly one may take issue with an argument that disposes of a term because of its etymological or everyday sense. But it would be fallacious to suppose that Augustine has rejected the idea purely because he has rejected a term for inadequately describing the idea. Rather, that may simply reflect that Augustine's definitions are different.

²³⁵ Most conspicuously VII.9.

²³⁶ The terms used in *DeT* VII.9.

Augustine next observes that the Greeks could say *tria prosopa* rather than *treis hypostaseis*, but recognises that the latter may better suit their language. This too continues the theme of terminological adequacy within a given language, not the content of the ideas to which those terms refer. He proceeds:

Now exactly the same arguments²³⁸ hold in the case of persons; it is not one thing for God to be and another for him to be a person, but altogether the same.

This again clarifies that Augustine is continuing an existing argument. The ‘same arguments’ (the Latin is singular: *eadem ratio*) take the reader back to the argument of VII.10 and the terminological inadequacy of ‘substance’. This is indicated by the pattern of phrasing: ‘it is not one thing for God to be ... and another ...to be a person...’. Characteristically Augustine has used phrases of the pattern ‘it is not one thing to be ... and another to be [happy, or wise, or some other predicate]’ to refer to God’s simplicity, in that happiness or wisdom are not modifications or accidents in him. Applied here, then, he actually denies that ‘person’ is a modification or accident. This must be stressed. In itself it renders uncomfortable an interpretation of VII.11 to the effect that the category we call ‘person’ is secondary or epiphenomenal.

However, invoking concepts of simplicity perhaps raises other problems. Simplicity language can suggest that God’s attributes are all equally fundamental so that, some argue, God’s mercy becomes ‘the same’ as his anger. A traditional answer could be that God is himself always the same and consistent in his dealings with creation. The attributes seem distinct to our perception because God’s actions have diverse effects, but do not reflect differences in God himself.²³⁹ Nevertheless this

²³⁷ See the start of *DeT* VII.10.

²³⁸ *in personis eadem ratio est.*

²³⁹ So Turretin *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* Topic 3. Q 5. IX and X.

would be unfortunate here, since it could suggest that the distinction of Persons is like the distinction of attributes: only economic. Has Augustine opened the door to this?

We now reach the section of VII.11 La Cugna omits.²⁴⁰ Augustine continues:

If he is said to be with reference to himself, and called person by way of relationship, then we could call Father and Son and Holy Spirit three persons in the same way as we talk about three friends or three neighbours or three relatives with reference to each other, not with reference to himself. So each of them is the friend or neighbour or relative of the other two, because these names signify relationships. What have we got then? Is it agreed that we can call the Father the person of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, or the Son the person of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit the person of the Father and of the Son. But that is not how we are in the habit of using person in any context;

This involves several stages:

1. Using 'person' as a relational term ('relationship-wise' in Hill's translation) entails being able to talk about the three persons as one would about three 'friends' or 'neighbours'. All are relational terms.
2. Talking about three friends or neighbours relationship-wise means one may say about any one of them: 'X is the friend or neighbour of the other two'.
3. But, if 'person' works identically to 'friend or neighbour', such usages should also hold good for talking about the trinitarian persons.
4. One should therefore be able to use 'person' similarly for Father or Son or Holy Spirit. One should therefore be able to say 'The Father is the person of the Son' and similar sentences.
5. Augustine rejects this as contrary to ordinary usage.

This argument, then, tests the adequacy of a term, 'person', taken as a relational predicate. Augustine compares the term with other relational terms (steps 1

²⁴⁰ La Cugna 1991:88f. See above.

and 2 above) and then tries to handle ‘person’ in the trinitarian context as one handles relational terms like ‘friends’ (steps 3 and, in particular, 4 above). He implies that such handling of ‘person’ produces absurdity (step 5 above).

Several observations are appropriate. First, what is at stake is the term ‘person’. The focus here is on what each of the three are, what they have in common. This ties the debate closely to the issue raised in VII.7, which states that if we call the three ‘three persons’, ‘person’ is what the three have in common.²⁴¹ The point, then, is commonality between the persons, not what constitutes distinction. Augustine has already repeatedly said that, for example, being Father is not what the three have in common.²⁴²

Secondly, this relative use of ‘person’ entails describing all three in the same way one would describe mutual friends and neighbours (step 1 above). However, Augustine has already noted the limits of just such a description of the Trinity ‘...because only the Father is father’.²⁴³ The reason for earlier rejecting the ‘three friends’ designation is because the ‘three friends’ usage does not capture what distinguishes the Father from the others, his particularity. So, if ‘three persons’ is equivalent to ‘three friends’, then, far from protecting personal values and relations, it is open to the objection that it does not reproduce Trinitarian distinctions in their particularity.

Thirdly, Augustine’s final objection turns largely on the equivalence he has constructed between ‘three friends’ and ‘three persons’. We can sensibly say ‘A is the

²⁴¹ *commune est eis id quod persona est.*

²⁴² E.g. *DeT VII.7. Non enim commune illis est id quod Pater est.*

friend of B', and 'B is the friend of A'. If the predication are really equivalent, one could substitute 'person' for 'friend' in sentences of this kind. Augustine's point is that one cannot: 'A is the person of B' does not, in ordinary linguistic usage, equate to 'A is the friend, or neighbour or relative of B'. The term 'person' does not function like that.

Augustine's examples starkly reveal the problems caused by such usage of the term 'person'. What is the difference between 'The Father is the Father of the Son' and the 'The Father is the person of the Son'? The phrase 'The Father is the person of the Son' risks attenuating the personal distinction and particularity of the Persons and their relations. The Father relates paternally to the Son and the Son filially to the Father. However, if one says 'The Father is the person of the Son', or 'the Son is the person of the Father' the relations readily sound identical, and those relating may also sound identical, completely matching images of each other. To pick up Augustine's earlier example,²⁴⁴ the Trinity is not just a society of three friends. Indeed, the phrase 'The Father is the person of the Son' could even risk obliterating distinct identities, making it sound as though Father and Son were one and the same, something Augustine has only just characterised as Sabellian.²⁴⁵

Augustine is not, therefore, disputing the personal distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit. Instead he argues a particular use of 'person', resulting in phrases like 'The Father is the person of the Son', is unworkable. The context for this is not an elimination of personal distinction but precisely his upholding of the particularities of the personal distinctions in question. This inadequacy of 'person' is anticipated by the

²⁴³ *DeT VII.7. tantum Pater ibi pater.*

²⁴⁴ *DeT VII.7.*

earlier observation that ‘person’ in answer to the question ‘Three what?’ inevitably speaks of what the three have in common.²⁴⁶ Once ‘person’ is so used, inevitably it cannot also tell us the content of distinctions between Father, Son and Spirit.

This section of VII.11 therefore fits very poorly with an interpretation that Augustine sacrifices personal distinction. La Cugna’s omission of it is extremely unfortunate.

La Cugna’s quotation then resumes:²⁴⁷

When we say the person of the Father, we mean nothing else than the substance of the Father. Therefore, as the substance of the Father is the Father himself, not insofar as He is the Father but insofar as He is, so too the person of the Father is nothing else than the Father Himself. For He is called a person in respect to himself, not in relation to the Son or to the Holy Spirit, just as He is called in respect to Himself, God, great, good, just, and other similar terms

La Cugna concludes that Augustine ‘denies the relative character of a divine person’.²⁴⁸ This is not quite accurate. Augustine’s argument has tended to a subtly different point. He has denied that the term ‘person’ by itself is predicated ‘relation-wise’. To say ‘A is a person’ does not pre-suppose an existing relationship.²⁴⁹ He does not deny that the different terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are predicated relation-wise. In fact later in VII.11 he re-asserts the need to talk about three, and continues to explain John 10:30 precisely in relational terms:²⁵⁰

...in Evangelio scriptum est: Ego et Pater unum sumus. Et unum dixit et sumus; unum secundum essentiam, quod idem Deus; sumus secundum relativum, quod ille Pater, hic Filius

²⁴⁵ *DeT* VII.9.

²⁴⁶ *DeT* VII.7.

²⁴⁷ La Cugna 1991:88f.

²⁴⁸ La Cugna 1991:89.

²⁴⁹ To be a person without relationship may be impoverishing and leave one unfulfilled. It is more ambitious to say a person does not exist without a relationship. See Harris 1998:217.

²⁵⁰ *DeT* VII.12.

‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are predicated ‘relation-wise’ because they do pre-suppose an existing relationship. One cannot have Father without Son.²⁵¹ The suspicion, therefore, is that La Cugna has merged Augustine’s treatment of the term ‘person’ with his very different treatment of the different terms ‘Son’ and ‘Father’. From this merger she seems to have inferred that, because Augustine insists the term ‘person’ is not to be predicated ‘relation-wise’,²⁵² while insisting the terms ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ are to be taken ‘relation-wise’,²⁵³ Augustine contradicts himself.²⁵⁴ This interpretation is, however, unnecessary if one reads VII.11 both fully and in the context of a discussion of the adequacy of terms used to safeguard against ‘diversity’ and ‘solitude’.

7.8.5. *Concluding Remarks on De Trinitate VII.11*

Thus the proposition that personal distinction has somehow been subsumed by inseparability remains unsubstantiated. It is, though, worth turning to other criticisms that this section of Book VII might generate. First, there is the consistent appeal in VII.10-11 to conventional usage and etymology. Doubtless, looking to the etymology and traditional uses of *hypostasis* and *substantia* risks short-changing Cappadocian subtlety in handling *ousia/hypostasis* distinctions. Still, Augustine’s critique of terminology in VII.7-11 has the merit of concentrating attention on what the terms are meant to express or protect²⁵⁵ and of increasing an awareness that some of a term’s usual nuances may need to be shed when applying it within Trinitarian discourse. While new usages may indeed need coining, nevertheless this can contribute to confusion.

²⁵¹ *DeT* V.6.

²⁵² *DeT* VII.11.

²⁵³ *DeT* V.6, *DeT* VII.12 etc.

²⁵⁴ La Cugna 1991:89.

Secondly, and more substantially, there is Augustine's contention about the term 'person': that one may say 'A is a person' without pre-supposing that A has any relations. This obviously raises the question whether Augustine has not here in fact made personal relations secondary, a non-relational view of person.

This raises two slightly different issues. The first deals with the significance of the difference between the term 'person' (which does not pre-suppose relation in Augustine's view) and the terms 'Father' and 'Son' (which do). Does the non-relational view of the term 'person' predominate? This does not follow from *De Trinitate* VII.11. There Augustine discussed the terminological adequacy of 'person', concluding that the proposition 'A is a person' does not presuppose relations. He is not denying relational categories exist but suggests not all relations apply to the Trinity. They are not 'three friends' or 'three Fathers' or 'three Sons'. He is trying to ensure the relations are described in their proper specificity.

Moreover, since these relations are eternal and unchanging, they are not equivalent to modifications or accidents.²⁵⁶ That means the specific and particular relations within the Trinity cannot be secondary. He has, moreover, repeatedly emphasised that he wants to defend both personal irreducibility²⁵⁷ (the point that the Father is not the Son) and the relative nature of 'Father' and 'Son' (these terms pre-suppose another in relation). Hence discussion about distinction and its viability must focus on the particular relations. The Father-Son relation therefore will fall for examination later.

²⁵⁵ Hence we may use 'person' in order to say something in response to 'three what?' *DeT* VII.11.

²⁵⁶ *DeT* V.6. So e.g. T. Wassmer 255f, Fortman 1972:143f.

The second issue relates to the more general propriety of arguing that the proposition that ‘A is a person’ does not pre-suppose relationship. Augustine is not committed to saying that relationships within the Trinity are secondary, since the specific trinitarian terms presuppose eternal relations. Yet, has Augustine made relations secondary for human persons? After all, human relations are necessarily temporal and contingent, for humans are. Human relations cannot be defended by reference to an uncreated being’s eternity, as God’s can be. Conceivably, a secondariness in human relations is supported by the psychological analogy if it implies self-sufficiency in human individuals, for each is made in the image of the triune God,²⁵⁸ who is complete in himself.

It is dangerous to pose questions for Augustine which he did not address, and caution is required in considering his possible answers. Nevertheless one relation is consistently present in his thinking and is irreducible for humans and can never be lost,²⁵⁹ namely that God is their creator. Other relations may be superadded during an individual’s history, marriage may or may not occur, friendships may or may not be formed. This creator-created relation, though, is inevitable. If I exist at all, I exist as a creature,²⁶⁰ and, as a creature, one who must worship its creator.²⁶¹ Here, then, an Augustinian framework has the resources to describe a relation for humans, which is primary, not secondary.

²⁵⁷ The term of Ayres 2000a:56, 2000b:59.

²⁵⁸ This is the repeated rationale for using the psychological analogy in *DeT* VIII-XIV.

²⁵⁹ Compare the ‘lose’ motif in the discussion of divine simplicity *DCD* XI.10.

²⁶⁰ Compare Macdonald 2001:83.

²⁶¹ *DCD* VII.29.

This approach has a further advantage in contemporary debate. H. Harris questions the stress in recent theology on becoming persons through relations.²⁶² She points out that this implies that, without relations, personhood is not established.²⁶³ This results in what she terms ‘relational determinism’. Rather, she contends, we should admit that persons are prior to relations,²⁶⁴ a formulation strikingly similar to Augustine’s in *De Trinitate* VII.11.

Perhaps part of this concern is that ‘becoming persons through relations’ confers significant power on those to whom one relates. They apparently have the power to confer or deny personhood on one by affirming or denying relationship. This could even imply that those others, objectively, confer or deny value. One might say that if people deny value to others, they also deny it to themselves. This is, perhaps, scant comfort, for one remains devalued. Harris’ contention that identity is independent of relations ensures that one is not completely defined by one’s relationships, or lack of them.

A possible answer is that while it may be deplorable that relations function thus, nevertheless they can. It is not nonsensical in everyday speech to say the victim of an abusive relationship ‘is not the same person’. Harris could well respond that abusive (or benign) relationships do not necessarily construct a person for ill (or good): some survive abusive relationships, and others remain unaffected by benign relationships. She might add that when we say that a relation has changed some-one

²⁶² Harris 1998:214.

²⁶³ Harris 1998:217.

²⁶⁴ Harris 1998:227.

we refer primarily to that person's attributes and do not intend to deny continuity of identity.²⁶⁵

However, unqualified acceptance of Harris' argument is not possible within an Augustinian framework. The difficulty arises from his insistence on the creator-creature relation. There it is extremely difficult to accede to Harris' suggestion that human persons are ontologically prior to relations.²⁶⁶ We exist in a creaturely relationship. This leaves open Harris' case that human-human relations such as friendship and marriage are not instances of 'becoming persons through relations', despite the enriching qualities of such relations.

In short, if one accepts that creating humans in God's own image establishes relation, then Augustine's proposal that to say 'A is a person' does not pre-suppose relation is more difficult to argue in the case of human persons than might initially appear.

7.9. Does Inseparability Subsume Distinction in the Field of Temporal Action?

Augustine understands inseparable action as the Persons working the same numerical act. This was evidently his position from soon after his conversion.²⁶⁷ However, the notion of inseparability there is so tight that even a relatively benevolent commentator like Ayres can comment that Augustine almost implies

²⁶⁵ After all, normally people retain memories of life before and after particular relationships, and memory, suggests B. Horne 1991:71, helps provide an integrating principle for the momentary egos of an individual's history.

²⁶⁶ Harris 1998:227.

²⁶⁷ *Letter 11* to Nebridius is dated typically 389.

patripassianism.²⁶⁸ The Augustinian account of the missions most sharply illustrates such pressures.

7.9.1. The Problem of the Missions

One ‘Arian’/Homoian argument is that the Son’s sending by the Father indicates inferiority. It is a form of the argument that the Son obeys the Father and is therefore lesser ontologically. The ‘Arian’/Homoian argument runs that traditional pre-Nicene responses, which would refer obedience to Christ’s human nature, are less applicable here,²⁶⁹ since the Son was sent before he was human. Therefore the Son is inferior in nature.

Augustine, then, must examine the mission especially in the light of what it discloses about the eternal relations of Father and Son.²⁷⁰ He has several responses to this ‘Arian’/Homoian argument,²⁷¹ but one substantial strand is very troubling. It runs like this. Augustine argues that ‘sending’ does not mean the Son and the Spirit came to a world from which they were previously absent.²⁷² Rather, they came visibly to a world in which they were already present.²⁷³ In this sending, the Son, jointly with the Father, sends himself.²⁷⁴ At one level this simply apparently applies inseparable operation to the specific case of the missions,²⁷⁵ and answers the ‘Arian’/Homoian objection. Inferiority does not arise because the Son sent himself.

²⁶⁸ Ayres 2000a:58.

²⁶⁹ Augustine’s *forma servi* principle.

²⁷⁰ Such an examination of the mission means the issue of the relation of the economic to the immanent is inherently present.

²⁷¹ As he does to the obedience question more generally.

²⁷² *DeT* II.7.

²⁷³ *DeT*. II.9.

²⁷⁴ E.g. *DeT* II.9.

²⁷⁵ Similar arguments can be launched for the Holy Spirit.

However, such a move without further qualification has devastating consequences. The obvious concern is the effect on the link between economic and immanent relations. Augustine faces a dilemma:

1. If he persists in asserting:-

(a) that the Son and Father jointly send the Son;

and

(b) that the economic mission reveals the immanent relation,²⁷⁶

then his account of the immanent relation seems to be that the Father and the Son inseparably and jointly beget the Son.

or

2. If he persists in asserting:

(a) that the Son and Father jointly send the Son;

and

(b) that the Father eternally begets the Son who does not beget but is begotten,

then he seems to sever the revelatory link between economic and immanent relations.

Regarding the first horn of this dilemma, Augustine has already asserted that God does not beget himself.²⁷⁷ Moreover, if joint sending implies joint begetting, then the Father is not distinguished by begetting, but presumably by being unbegotten. Regarding the second horn, Augustine again finds himself faced with inconsistency, for here he seems to be denying that the economic discloses the immanent, while elsewhere invoking the very principle that it does so in the case of the Holy Spirit.

²⁷⁶ Apparently one of Augustine's grounds for asserting the Spirit proceeds from Father and Son.

²⁷⁷ *DeT* I.1.

Further the johannine material, especially, simply does not on its surface suggest that the Son and Father jointly send the Son. Fatherhood is linked with sending, but the Son is not expressly said to send with the Father. This underlines the impression that economic considerations are under-played, thus supporting the view that Augustine ultimately severs the economic from the immanent Trinity.²⁷⁸

A related problem is the application of inseparable operation principles to prayer and salvation. In terms of prayer Augustine can talk of Jesus praying for us as ‘less than the Father...but as his equal he hearkens to us with the Father’.²⁷⁹ This does, though, prompt the question whether Augustine envisages the Son as eternal Son addressing the Father specifically in the incarnation, as, for example, Tertullian thought. Concerning salvation, Augustine apparently regards the operation as so inseparable that the whole Trinity can be addressed as Father.²⁸⁰ The relevant phrase reads: *recte dicimus etiam: Patrem nostrum, per gratiam suam nos regenerantem*. Hill describes this as a ‘disastrous’ inference from inseparable operation.²⁸¹ He reasons that this renders the trinitarian distinction of Persons irrelevant to us.²⁸² As observed earlier, this does sever the economic from the immanent,²⁸³ but this is not modalism in the normal understanding. Here one inseparable operation masks an eternal threeness. Yet Augustine also insists that inseparable operation does not mean the Persons are involved in the same action in the same way. Thus the Father is not

²⁷⁸ E.g. Jenson 1982:116.

²⁷⁹ *DeT* I.21. The relevant phrase reads . *Ex hoc enim rogat quo minor est Patre; quo vero aequalis exaudit cum Patre*. Hill has softened the problem by inserting ‘to us’ to qualify *exaudit*.

²⁸⁰ *DeT* V.12.

²⁸¹ Hill 1991:203 n.21.

²⁸² As Hill had earlier noted 1985:95f. Our relations become to an undifferentiated ‘God’.

²⁸³ Hill 1985:95f.

crucified, buried and raised.²⁸⁴ This brings us to possible solutions for the problems outlined above.

7.9.2. Solutions to the Encroachments of Inseparable Operation

The most obvious prospective solution is the doctrine of appropriation. For La Cugna, once Augustine has created the problem of effectively indistinguishable works, the pressure somehow to re-connect the economic and immanent spheres leads to the construction of the doctrine of appropriations.²⁸⁵ She comments (her description is representative):

Appropriation means assigning an attribute (wisdom) or an activity (creation) to one of the three persons without denying that the attribute or activity applies to all three.²⁸⁶

As put, appropriation inevitably sounds somewhat artificial in that a given appropriation on this account does not seem truly distinctive. It simply does not meet the problem that inseparable operation can seem indistinguishable. Put bluntly, it looks precisely like an avoidance of full-orbed inseparable operation. This apparently remains so even if appropriation is because of a scriptural association, such as the Son being Wisdom. Hence La Cugna's tepid reception of this version of appropriation is justifiable.²⁸⁷ Accordingly, other strands within Augustine's theology start to attract attention. However, before looking at the possibility of inseparable yet truly distinct operation, two preliminary questions must be aired, one terminology, one scriptural.

²⁸⁴ *DeTI* 1.7.

²⁸⁵ La Cugna 1991:97f, 99f

²⁸⁶ La Cugna 1991:100.

²⁸⁷ La Cugna 1991:100.

As regards terminology, Augustine is associated with maxims such as *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*.²⁸⁸ Is *indivisus* terminology meant to convey operation which is ‘inseparable’, or ‘undivided’, or ‘indistinguishable’? If the operations are *indivisa* in the sense of ‘indistinguishable’ this maxim would naturally generate the question of how one can arrive at personal distinctions.²⁸⁹

Yet is this Augustine’s maxim? The critical section *De Trinitate* I-VII does not use it. Moltmann claims Augustine ‘laid the foundation’ for this maxim in Book XV,²⁹⁰ but this is baffling since *indivisus* terms do not occur at the reference he gives. Nor does Augustine prefer cognates of *indivisus* to express unity of operation. He uses *inseparabilis*.²⁹¹ Inseparability readily implies that two things or entities exist, for we speak of two things being inseparable from each other. ‘Indivisible’, however, readily includes the idea of one single entity. Anyway, subtle differences exist between works being *indivisa*, literally, of course, ‘undivided’, as against *indivisibilia*, literally ‘not able to be divided’/‘indivisible’ and which more readily connotes ‘indistinguishable’.²⁹²

There is a danger that the maxim *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, with its *indivisus* terminology, misrepresents Augustine, since he prefers phrases like *inseparabiliter operentur*.²⁹³ Augustine’s inseparability of operation may have been distorted.

²⁸⁸ E.g. Moltmann 1981: 108, 237 n.21 and La Cugna 1991:97. The critical point is the *indivisus* terminology.

²⁸⁹ La Cugna 1991:97f proceeds down just this path.

²⁹⁰ Moltmann 1981:237 n.21.

²⁹¹ E.g. *DeT* I.7,8,12,15,25; II.3,9,18; and IV.30. Many of these relate specifically to inseparable operation not simply inseparability of Persons.

As regards Scripture, La Cugna notes rightly of the doctrine of appropriations that certain attributes and actions are allocated to particular Persons, theoretically on the basis of Scripture.²⁹⁴ Manifestly, actions are characteristically attributed in Scripture. However, this needs supplementing. Scripture also allocates the same action to different persons. Thus G. Fee draws attention to the New Testament's presentation of the appropriation of individual salvation as the work of each Person,²⁹⁵ having earlier commented on the equating of activity between the three that Paul suggests in 2 Corinthians 13:14.

Thus, problems about distinctions in inseparable operation are present in precisely the materials Augustine attempts to synthesise.²⁹⁶ Does Scripture itself attempt or imply any resolution? Creation, of course, is a highly significant example. The Son's association in creating is one of the most powerful indications of his deity.²⁹⁷ Creation is also, of course, associated with both Father and Son,²⁹⁸ but with the suggestion that the Son is the agent, through whom the Father creates.

Such an account tallies closely with John's Gospel. If one accepts that the works the Son does are indeed the Father's too,²⁹⁹ then the obvious pattern of integration is that the Son does what his Father wishes:

...for I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.³⁰⁰

²⁹² Tertullian *Anima* 51 uses it of the soul as a single entity.

²⁹³ From *DeT* I.7.

²⁹⁴ La Cugna 1991:100.

²⁹⁵ Fee 1999:54.

²⁹⁶ Plantinga 1991:316 asserts Augustine goes far beyond what scripture requires, but fails to discuss in depth what version of inseparability Scripture does require.

²⁹⁷ See *Reply to Faustus* 21.4.

²⁹⁸ E.g. I Cor. 8:6, used in this kind of regard by Augustine *DeT* I.12.

²⁹⁹ See e.g. John 5:36, 14:10.

The Son is his Father's agent, and the actions are truly his and his Father's.³⁰¹ There is inseparability but also distinction, because Father and Son are asymmetrically involved, one as principal, one as agent.

Bourassa argues that Augustine envisaged inseparable operation occurring according to the order of the relations.³⁰² Supporting evidence occurs at several points. There is Augustine's sermonic material on John 5:19. Thus addressing the Son, Augustine comments 'All things that the Father doeth, He doeth by thee',³⁰³ and other material closely echoes this.³⁰⁴ This strongly suggests an inseparable operation in which, while each actor is 'equally' involved, each is not involved symmetrically. The Father operates by the Son.

This is the consistent pattern in a lengthier dealing with this problem: *Sermon* 52 on Matthew 3:13. The issue here is Jesus' baptism where each Person appears to be doing something different. 'Here then we have the Trinity in a certain sort distinguished.'³⁰⁵ Augustine reaffirms that the Trinity is inseparable, yet also that the Father is not the Son nor vice versa.³⁰⁶ This is a characteristic way in which Augustine refers to the distinction of Persons. He moves then to the issue of apparently separate action, namely that the Son is born.³⁰⁷ His resolution starts in *Sermon* 52.4 when he asks: 'Doeth the Father anything without the Son?' For Augustine the answer is 'No' and he immediately appeals to the work of creation. Creation is then explained in terms of the Son's agency. Quoting John 1:3a he states:

³⁰⁰ John 6:38.

³⁰¹ Compare the work of P. Borgen 1970 on Jesus as God's agent or *shaliach* in John's Gospel.

³⁰² Bourassa 1977:366.

³⁰³ *Sermon* 126.12.

³⁰⁴ *Tractate* 19.2.

³⁰⁵ *Sermon* 52.1.

We understand then by this that the whole creation was made by the Son, the Father made by His Word - God by His Power and Wisdom³⁰⁸

This principle of agency is extended to God's government of the world, so that God creates and rules by his Son.³⁰⁹

Augustine then states a fundamental fear about inseparable operation, that it introduces patripassianism,³¹⁰ and goes on to discuss the birth of Christ,³¹¹ the Passion of Christ,³¹² and the Resurrection.³¹³ He concludes that none of these was done without both Persons, but each was performed by the Son. He therefore comments:

You see then a distinction of Persons, and an inseparableness of operation. Let us not say therefore that the Father doeth anything without the Son, or the Son anything without the Father.³¹⁴

This phrasing is interesting. The Persons have done the same thing in that no action is done 'without' the other. But their 'contributions' to particular actions have not been identical. The Father creates by the Son, not vice versa. Because the 'contributions' are distinct, the distinctions of Persons can indeed be discerned, even though the operation is inseparable. This means that inseparable operation does not subsume distinction such that it cannot be discerned or is irrelevant. Augustine stresses that the Son himself does the dying, but that the giving over to death is the action of both.³¹⁵

³⁰⁶ *Sermon 52.2.*

³⁰⁷ *Sermon 52.3.*

³⁰⁸ *Sermon 52.5.*

³⁰⁹ *Sermon 52.5.*

³¹⁰ *Sermon 52.6.*

³¹¹ *Sermon 52.8-11.*

³¹² *Sermon 52.12.*

³¹³ *Sermon 52.13.*

³¹⁴ *Sermon 52.14.*

³¹⁵ *Sermon 52* goes on to discuss how inseparable operation can be illustrated, using memory, understanding and will to this end (*Sermon 52.19*). But they are distinct and an act of will is not the same as an act of memory, although it may involve it.

This, perhaps, helps resolve some problems discernible in Augustine's account of the missions. It will be recalled that Augustine argued that the Father and Son jointly send the Son, thereby creating a pattern which cannot be readily transferred without qualification to the Son's generation.

However, Augustine does qualify the idea of joint sending. This emerges in the initial discussion of mission in *De Trinitate* II.20-22 when Augustine notes that the Scriptures do not speak of the Father as sent. The rationale for this is developed later:

Not because one is greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other the begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender. For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son.³¹⁶

The mission pattern, that the Son is the one sent, is not arbitrary, but reflects the eternal relation. Thus for Augustine the Father could not have been sent in the Incarnation. It makes sense, then, to see the Father's sending of the Son as being a sending 'not without the Son'.³¹⁷ But the statement that the Son is sent 'not without the Son' affirms that this sending is no independent action by the Father. It is not designed to assert that Father and Son are identically involved.

Augustine considers this further in *Answer to Maximinus*:

It was not fitting that the Begetter be sent by his Son, but that the Son be sent by his Begetter. This is not inequality of substance, but the order of nature.³¹⁸

³¹⁶ *DeT* IV.27 *Non quia ille maior est et ille minor; sed quia ille Pater est, ille Filius; ille genitor, ille genitus; ille a quo est qui mittitur, ille qui est ab eo qui mittit. Filius enim a Patre est, non Pater a Filio.*

³¹⁷ Using the terminology of *Sermon* 52.

³¹⁸ *Ans Max* II.xiv.8. *Non enim genitorem ab eo quem genuit, sed genitum a genitore mitti oportebat: verum haec non est inaequalitas substantiae, sed ordo naturae.*

As with *De Trinitate* II-IV, Augustine is concerned to refute ideas that the sending of the Son shows inequality of substance. To answer why the Father should not be sent, he appeals to the filial relationship. The Son is sent because he is 'of' the Father.³¹⁹ The Father sends because he begets. The mission indicates origin.³²⁰

This in turn preserves a certain priority for the Father. He is revealed as the principle of origin,³²¹ as the end of the section in *De Trinitate* dealing directly with the missions makes clear:

We should understand that these sendings are not mentioned in scripture because of any inequality or dissimilarity of substance between the divine persons, but because of the created visible manifestation of the Son and the Holy Spirit; or better still, in order to bring home to us that the Father is the source and origin of all deity.³²²

This provokes several observations. First, this underlines the importance of Augustine's third interpretative rule, that some statements are understood as referring simply to the Son's origin.³²³

Secondly, this stress on the Son's origin provides a way to qualify inseparability of persons and operations that allows distinctions to be preserved. It is, though, a major qualification of inseparability. The obvious question is why Augustine did not make it clearer. The obvious answer is that in his polemical context of dispute with 'Arians'/Homoians, distinctions of some kind were a given. The common presupposition was of distinction. Inseparability, though, is the point of difficulty and this is what he stresses. Harnack, though, has encouraged an approach

³¹⁹ Hill 1985:66.

³²⁰ Hendricx 1955:53.

³²¹ Clark 2001:94.

³²² *DeT* IV.32. *Sive enim propter visibilem creaturam sive potius propter principii commendationem, non propter inaequalitatem vel imparilitatem vel dissimilitudinem substantiae in Scripturis haec posita intelleguntur.*

to Augustine through his account of distinction, but that was not Augustine's polemical priority.

Thirdly, this stress on the sender naturally leads to a consideration of the Father.³²⁴ Mission and procession are traced back to the Father specifically, not to a 'fourth' entity lying beyond the Persons. There is unexpected contact with Cappadocian emphases on the Father as *arche*.

Fourthly, the issues of distinction of Persons and distinguishability in actions have alike led back to the relation of generation. To that, attention now turns.

7.10. Relational Order, Inseparability and Distinction

Augustine uses generation to develop several important concepts.

7.10.1. Generation Guarantees Nature

Augustine insists that the Son is a true son,³²⁵ and a true son is of the same nature as his father.³²⁶ Hence it is generation that means the Son is of the same nature as his Father (a strong point of contact with Hilary). Generation therefore entails equality, but specifically equality of nature.³²⁷ Equality of nature means that what the Father is, so is the Son too,³²⁸ but generation is the framework within which to construe equality.

³²³ *DeT* II.3.

³²⁴ Augustine did, of course, teach the Spirit's procession from both Father and Son, but insisted the Spirit proceeds principally from the Father.

³²⁵ Drawn from I John 5:20. *DeT* I.9, 22, 26.

³²⁶ *Sermon* 139.3.

³²⁷ *Sermon* 117.14, *Tractate* 71.2.

7.10.2. *Generation Means Distinction of Relations*

While Augustine stresses that generation grounds equality of nature,³²⁹ generation also entails distinction. However, the Persons are not distinct merely as duplicates of each other. Generation suggests rather non-reversible or asymmetrical relations. Augustine captures this with statements such as the Son is ‘of’ or ‘from’ the Father, not vice versa.³³⁰ This means the Persons are not the ‘same’,³³¹ even though there is equality of nature.

Their distinct individuation, moreover, depends on their relations. The Father is ‘Father’ because of the Son.³³² This means that the relations ground not only equality of nature between the Persons, but also their uniqueness and particularity, for the relations are both reciprocal and also asymmetrical. Generation entails individuated persons who are unique because of their relations. We turn now to consider something close to the heart of ‘Arian’/Homoian objections, obedience.

7.10.3. *Does Generation Mean a Relation of Obedience?*

Faced with the ‘Arian’/Homoian argument that the Son’s obedience on earth shows he is not truly equal to the Father, Augustine produces several responses. First, he appeals to the rule of interpretation applying the *forma servi* principle to some texts.³³³ Aside from any tendency to erode connections between the economic and the immanent, this has the disadvantage of not covering all the texts cited. John 5:19ff is

³²⁸ *Sermon* 139.2.

³²⁹ *Sermon* 139.3.

³³⁰ *Sermon* 127.4, *Tractates* 20.4, 22.14.

³³¹ *De Fide et Symbolo* 16.

³³² *Tractate* 19.13 Compare *Conf* XIII.xi.12 to the effect that the Persons are defined by their relation to each other. See too *DeT* V.6.

³³³ This is true as late as the controversies with Maximinus: *Ans Max* I.v.

an obvious problem, for instance, because Jesus' words take us beyond the Incarnation.

Secondly, sometimes Augustine seems to envisage only one will in the Trinity, not simply in the sense of unanimity (whether produced through an order of relations or through the consent of equals), but in that the Trinity has numerically only one will.³³⁴ The difficulty here, as Tertullian had long ago noted, is that this apparently leaves finally an undifferentiated unity, which is misleadingly revealed in the Incarnation. Personal distinctions seem very tenuous on this basis. To that extent, this response coheres but poorly with Augustine's insistence that the relations mark genuine distinction of an asymmetrical kind.

Thirdly, at one stage in the controversy with Maximinus, Augustine seems to move towards fully symmetry of relations between Father and Son. Thus:

But just as the Son does the will of the Father, so the Father does the will of the Son.³³⁵

Augustine justifies this from John 17:24 where, in Augustine's version, Jesus addresses the Father in jussive terms (*volo*) rather than petitionary terms (*Rogo* or *Peto*). The Father would do what he wanted, just as he did what the Father wanted.

At first glance this strongly states that relations between the Father and the Son are fully symmetrical. It forms part of an argument that finishes by citing John 5:19 to the effect that Father and Son perform inseparably the same operations.³³⁶ The

³³⁴ E.g. *DeT* IV.12.

³³⁵ *Ans Max* II.xx.4. *Sicut autem Filius facit voluntatem Patris, sic et Pater facit voluntatem Filii.*

³³⁶ Teske 1995:303 leads less clearly to this point (although the destination is the same) because in the clause *et non alia ille, alia iste; sed quae ille, haec etiam iste* he appears to supply the verb *vult* or

idea that the Father ‘does what the Son wants’ picks up the theme that the Father’s actions (in John 17:24 ensuring the preservation of Jesus’ followers) are not without the Son. Nevertheless this striking remark requires further comment. First, exegetically, this represents a very strong reading of the ‘want’ language of John 17:24 (θέλω). The word does not necessarily denote authority but is consistent with request.³³⁷

Secondly, Augustine’s reading tends to erode the distinctions in inseparable action that he establishes elsewhere. Elsewhere, the pattern of the Father acting through the Son appears consistent with their eternal relations. But here the reversibility of the Father doing the Son’s will as the Son does the Father’s will means that the uniqueness and particularity shown in the Father acting by the Son begins to evaporate.

Thirdly, this may well indicate that coupling John 17:24 with John 5:19 here, actually joins two disparate elements together. Augustine’s normal approach to inseparable operations based on John 5:19 invokes non-reversible relations, just what John 17:24 as here explained, tends to deny. It is, of course, disputable whether the exegesis of John 17:24 or that of John 5:19 should take precedence in discussing Augustine’s trinitarian thought. This question will be dealt with below.

equivalent, but the context makes it more attractive to supply *facit* since the finite verbs before and after are from *facere*.

³³⁷ E.g. John 12:21 and the request to see Jesus. Compare John 15:7 where Jesus instructs his followers to ask for what one wants.

A fourth strategy by which Augustine attempts to answer the ‘Arian’/Homoian argument is that the Son simply is the Father’s expressed Word.³³⁸ Since the Son’s obedience could only be to a command, that is, a word, from the Father, and the Son is himself the Word of the Father, the Son would in a sense be obeying himself. As such one can scarcely pose the question ‘Does the Son’s obedience establish his inferiority?’

This, however, is far from satisfactory. It raises questions about who said he was doing the Father’s will.³³⁹ The *forma servi* rule covers such verses uncomfortably because one may think more characteristically of a person obeying, albeit in a nature. On that basis the Son obeys and the *forma servi* principle only specifies the nature in which the divine person obeys. Thus the ‘Arian’/Homoian question would remain. Equally, such a response only invites the supplementary question whether the Word is contoured, so to speak, as the Father wishes. If the Word is not so contoured, this risks making the Father appear subjected to some necessity, contrary to basic Augustinian thought about the uncreated creator.³⁴⁰ If, however, the Word is so contoured, this once again raises the ‘Arian’/Homoian question about the primacy of the Father’s will. Therefore, this response by Augustine at best only postpones the question. It does not answer it.

A fifth strategy Augustine employs runs like this. Obedience does not establish inferiority of nature. Instead, Augustine pursues the analogy with human sons. When human sons obey their parents, they do not show inferiority of nature. He writes:

³³⁸ *Ans Max II.xxiv.*

³³⁹ John 6:38.

Of what else are they trying to convince us by these testimonies of the sacred scriptures³⁴¹ but that the Father and the Son have different natures, because the Son is shown to be obedient to the Father? They would not of course, say this in the case of human beings. After all, if a human son is obedient to his human father, it does not follow that the two of them have different natures.³⁴²

This argument offers considerable advantages for Augustine. He can concede that the Son does indeed obey, but can also appeal to the same relation, sonship, which he uses to establish equality of nature and asymmetrical distinction. Part of the asymmetry between Father and Son on this view is that the Son, at the level of person rather than nature, does the Father's will.

This allows him both inseparable action, for the Father acts by his Son, and yet also particularity and distinction, for Father and Son are not symmetrically involved in inseparable operation. This rationale for inseparability and distinction in temporal action is derived from, and reveals, the eternal relation. Hence Hendricx's striking comment that the Father-Son relation, that is the personal relation, as distinct from questions of nature, is not one of equality but inequality.³⁴³

This would not be wholly alien to Augustine's thinking elsewhere. Thus, while conceding that man and woman are alike in the image of God, an equality of nature, he comments of domestic arrangements that a house is rightly ordered when a husband commands and a wife obeys.³⁴⁴ Such an economy of marriage might be rejected in contemporary thinking, but this indicates that for Augustine obedience

³⁴⁰ E.g. *Against Fortunatus* Day 1.6.

³⁴¹ Sc. Gal. 4:4, Jn. 6:38, Lk. 4:43, Jn. 12:49, Mt. 26:39 and Phil. 2:8.

³⁴² *Ans Arian Sermon* VI.6. See too *Ans Max* II.xiv.8 and 9.

³⁴³ Hendricx 1955:41. 'Leur relation réciproque [sc. that of Father and Son] n'est pas une relation d'égalité mais d'inégalité.'

³⁴⁴ *Tractate* 2.14.

within a relationship did not necessarily demonstrate inequality of nature. This is not just special pleading against the ‘Arian’/Homoian objection.

Such a scheme offers Augustine the further advantage of defending the Father’s *principium*, something he is concerned to do both in his denial that the Father could have been sent to be incarnate,³⁴⁵ and in his insistence that the Spirit proceeds *principally* from the Father.³⁴⁶

7.10.4 Concluding Remarks on Obedience

Which of these avenues should be pursued? The first, the application of the *forma servi* rule, as he himself tacitly concedes,³⁴⁷ does not meet all the relevant texts. The second, that there is only one will in the Trinity, tends to leave Augustine vulnerable to the ultimate evaporation of the personal distinctions. The third avenue, having a fully symmetrical relation where ‘...the Father does the will of the Son’,³⁴⁸ again tends to eliminate particularity in the relations. The fourth avenue, where the Son simply is the Father’s expressed Word,³⁴⁹ does not meet, but only postpones the point that Maximinus and others were making. The fifth avenue, in which sonship provides equality of nature and also a personal relation whose asymmetry involves particularity, accounts for Augustine’s core themes of inseparable operation and distinction. It is thus the explanation best cohering with Augustine’s overall purposes. Its place within his framework, however, is obscured by the presence of other, competing, explanations. Moreover, the second and third avenues outlined above

³⁴⁵ *DeT* IV.27. 32.

³⁴⁶ Augustine famously describes the Spirit as ‘gift’ *DeT* V.12, XV.29, 33-36. This important point is raised in the next chapter dealing with John’s Gospel.

³⁴⁷ By introducing his third rule of interpretation. *DeT* II.3.

³⁴⁸ *Ans Max* II.xx.4.

³⁴⁹ *Ans Max* II.xxiv.

seem ultimately incompatible with Augustine's insistence on particular and asymmetrical distinction between the Persons.

7.11 Conclusion

Augustine's basic trinitarian framework revolves around two pairs of ideas, eternal relation and temporal action on the one hand, and inseparability and distinction on the other. Sonship plays an integrating role here. The Father-Son relation necessarily involves the existence for each Person of the other (supplying notions of distinction) and is a relation from which the other cannot be abstracted or lost (supplying notions of inseparability). The notion of simplicity is decisive for regulating these ideas. The relation is asymmetrical in that the Son is of the Father, not the Father of the Son and this entails the Persons are individuated and unique. The Father-Son relation entails equality of nature since the true Son shares his Father's nature. This Father-Son relation explains too the inseparability yet distinction of operation found in the economy, for Father and Son do the same acts, but the Father does them by the Son, his agent.

The Father-Son relation is also relevant to obedience. Obedience within the economy relates back to the eternal relation of Father and Son. Obedience is best referred to the personal relation between Father and Son and is part of their distinction and particularity. Obedience does not, then, bear on equality of nature.

This further suggests that denying the Son's obedience may undercut Augustine's account of inseparable yet distinct operations, in particular undermining distinctions which are not just numerical but involve particularities. This in turn may

produce two different trajectories of development. One would be towards an account in which the Persons themselves become indistinguishable. This could give rise to concerns for understandings of the human person. The second would be towards defending distinction in the economy at the expense of inseparability. Such separable operation arguably moves one closer to a polytheism Augustine associated with gods who had separable spheres of operation and ultimately acted independently.

This means that Augustine has more substantial contacts with earlier Nicene supporters and ante-Nicenes than is sometimes imagined. He shares Athanasius' emphasis on divine simplicity, which entails personal relations which cannot be lost but retain differentiation. He shares Hilary's insistence that the true Son is of the same nature as the one who begot him, hence his insistence on equality of nature. He shares Tertullian's commitment to God's cosmic monarchy in his assertion of the integrity of the act of creation as an inseparable operation of the Trinity.

However, some strands in his thought indeed could open the door to inseparability subsuming distinction. This arises partly from seeing the mission as a joint sending of Father and Son. Here Augustine seems distant from the biblical witness and vulnerable to some disastrous implications. This is offset by his accounts of how inseparable operation is not symmetrical but reflects the Father acting by the Son, and by his insistence that the Father is not sent because he is not begotten. These qualifications show again the importance of the Father-Son relation, on which they both depend. Nevertheless, without these qualifications, Augustine's account of the missions could well erode distinctions.

A similar tendency can be found in the willingness to argue against Maximinus that the Father and Son, so to speak, reciprocally do each other's will. Again, other competing elements can offset this, but this leaves the reader needing to discern the dominant lines in Augustine's thought. In both these charges, though, one aspect of the problem is inseparable operation and the difficulty of establishing distinctions within that.

All this warrants considerable revision of some charges lodged against Augustine. Harnack's foundational charge of modalism, from which so much else flows, cannot be accepted without more argument. As just indicated, a central pressure-point for Augustine is inseparability and distinction in the economy, not apparent three-ness at the economic level yielding to a hidden one-ness. Moreover, given Augustine's framework which stresses personal distinction and inseparability, it is hard to see his theology as necessarily sacrificing relational categories to substantial ones, indeed the key text of *De Trinitate* VII.11, so often cited to prove this, has an alternative and preferable explanation. Similarly the idea that Augustine starts with substantial 'one-ness' as his dominating thought fits poorly with the place he gives personal distinction. Nor, of course, does the structure of *De Trinitate* permit the idea that Augustine starts with substantial 'one-ness' as his opening point in a sequence of argument. The stress on personal distinction also renders much more vulnerable the view that Augustine's God is ultimately narcissistic. The psychological analogies may, of course, still create this trajectory, but not only does that fall outside the present enquiry, it would be a movement that existed despite, not because of, Augustine's basic framework of inseparability and distinction. Nor, on reflection, does Augustine wantonly downplay the economy, thereby creating a need for a

natural theology. His doctrine of inseparability turns repeatedly to the economy demonstrated and explained by Jesus, above all in John 5:19ff. He consistently tries to relate that economy to the immanent being of God, for inseparable operation is understood not despite links between the economic and the immanent, but in the light of connections between the economic and immanent. Augustine may, of course, wrongly interpret John 5. But the fault then would be exegetical, not the methodological error of disregarding the economy.

Problems remain, naturally, for a modern theologian reading Augustine. First, which of his strands of argument on the obedience question in particular should be preferred? The best fit relates to the conception of an obedient Son, for the reasons outlined earlier. Secondly, Augustine has given a very stark picture not just of the actions of Jesus but of the actions of the Father. He sees their actions as being inseparable in the economy. It is apt therefore to turn to the economy of the Father's actions as given in John, the Gospel on which Augustine relied so heavily in defending his account of inseparable operation.

CHAPTER 8: JOHN'S GOSPEL AND THE GIVING FATHER

It is proposed that:

8(a). John's Gospel should not be approached purely as a christocentric account, but as a theocentric account built up through christology.

8(b). The Father is importantly characterised not just as the sender of Jesus the Son, but as the giving Father.

8(c). This giving is manifested in the eternal relations in the gift of life-in-himself to the Son and economically in the gift of authority over the cosmos to the Son. Giving spans both economic and immanent.

8(d). The Father's giving is not confined to the Son but also characterises his relation to the world and believers.

8(e). As a comprehensive giver, the Father is characterised as inherently generous, but also as sovereign, in that he can only give what he has the right to give.

8(f). As the final source of what is given to the Son and what the Son has to give, the giving motif creates a strongly patrocentric movement in the Gospel. The Gospel's theocentricity is a patrocentricity.

8(g). As the giver of the Son's life and authority, the Father emerges as having paternal authority over the Son, confirmed by the Son's insistence on his sonship being marked by obedience.

8(h). The words and works of Jesus are depicted as joint operations disclosing the Father's indwelling of Jesus.

8.1 Introduction

It now falls to review some of the trinitarian material in the Gospel of John, the Gospel on which the accounts outlined above so heavily relied.

8.1.1. Patristic concerns

Despite dissimilarities, the patristic writers examined above exhibit some fundamental common concerns. All alike wish to repudiate polytheism as well as assimilation of the Persons. A common feature of their strategies for doing this, albeit variously expressed, is their conception of the Father as the one from whom the Son derives all he is and has. Tertullian speaks of the Father's monarchy, in which the Son shares. Origen likewise sees the Son as perfectly and eternally imaging his Father and being given authority from his Father. Athanasius envisages again a cosmic monarchy in which the Son is a 'good' Son, not independent of the Father, but from him alone, and therefore holding things from him. Hilary likewise stresses the Son's filial derivation from the Father, resulting in the Son's perfect sharing his perfect Father's nature, and in filial obedience. Augustine, far from breaking with earlier pre-Nicene theology, develops it into a more articulated version of inseparable operation in which the Son, on the most consistent version of his arguments, shares his Father's nature and, as an obedient Son, is the executor of their joint actions.

This pattern of derivation provides integration. The Son is inseparably of the Father and no independent, 'second power' in heaven. Jesus' actions are those of an obedient son, rather than a being who *acts* independently in the economy of space and time and who therefore *exists* eternally somehow independently of the Father. Derivation also entails distinction. For the Son to derive means there must be an

‘other’ from whom derivation takes place. Thus derivation patterns readily serve the needs of both monotheism and personal distinction.

However, derivation is from the Father. It thus inevitably leads back to the one from whom the Son derives being in himself and authority in the cosmos. This means that the issues raised by these authors readily become patrocentric,¹ not merely theocentric, but patrocentric, because it is as Father that God gives and delegates to his Son.² Therefore, Nils Dahl’s highly pertinent remark about the need for a *theology* in the strict sense is well-taken, but requires in this examination of John a more specific focus,³ namely, what picture of the Father does the Gospel present? For arguably it is here that these Patristic syntheses stand or fall on their own terms.

8.1.2. Using John’s Gospel

At first glance, John 20:31, *inter alia*, focuses the reader’s attention on Jesus and his identity, as the Christ and Son of God.⁴ This is supported by Jesus’ continual presence in the narrative and the authorial perspective, which employs techniques, such as irony, to ‘enlist’ the reader to see things from Jesus’ view.⁵ R. Bultmann comments: ‘The Gospel of John fundamentally contains but a single theme: the Person of Jesus.’⁶

¹ T. Torrance 1995:64 applies the term to ‘Nicene’ theology. It is extended here to include the pre-Nicene Tertullian and Augustine, whose proximity to Nicene thought has not always been fully recognised.

² Tertullian, of course, can envisage the Word as the primary category for the Second Person. Even so, the trajectory of his thought tends in a patrocentric direction given his stress on the reliability of the Incarnation as revelation.

³ Dahl 1991:153-163.

⁴ Carson 1991:662 contends that this should be rendered ‘that you may believe the Christ, the Son of God, is Jesus’. This does not affect the point made here.

⁵ See D. Marguerat 1993:223 to the effect that irony is a language of initiation.

⁶ Bultmann 1971:5.

Were this the whole story, there would be some discomfort in reading John for confirmation of a patrocentric trinitarian synthesis. However, it is unsatisfactory to see John as exclusively christocentric. Taking John 20:31, even the term ‘Christ’ takes one beyond Jesus - anointed by whom and for what? As for ‘Son of God’ this manifestly raises issues of derivation: who is the God whose Son Jesus is? Further, there is the prevalent ‘sending’ language and the Gospel’s emphasis that Jesus is not simply claiming to be God *tout court*, but the Son of God. Hence G. O’Day perceptively remarks:

To focus exclusively on Jesus is to miss [John’s] central claim. John celebrates what Jesus reveals about God, not what Jesus reveals about himself.⁷

Hence, it is not necessarily procrustean to examine the extent, if any, to which John endorses a patrocentric reading.

This should not, of course, preclude all christological reading. Jesus’ identity is at stake, Culpepper remarks, in scene after scene,⁸ but above all in terms of where he comes from,⁹ his derivation. Barrett comments: ‘[t]here could hardly be a more christocentric writer than John, yet his very christocentricity is theocentric.’¹⁰ It is plausible to ask whether the Gospel focuses the reader theocentrically via the Father-Son relationship. If so, then the kind of Father the First Person is contributes substantially to John’s theology in Dahl’s sense.

However, investigating the Gospel’s account of God as Father is not straightforward. The Gospel does not list God’s attributes,¹¹ but instead narrates

⁷ O’Day 2001:29.

⁸ R. Culpepper 1998:89.

⁹ Culminating in 19:9 where Pilate asks Jesus where he is from. Anticipated in earlier disputes at 7:27ff (ironically) and 8:14.

¹⁰ Barrett:1982:32.

¹¹ Compare Thompson 1997:232 on this.

them.¹² Naturally this does not mean the Gospel denies that predication is possible concerning God. The narrative *form* does not necessitate strongly apophatic theology, although specific narrative *content* might. Predicates are, anyway, made of God. Thus Jesus describes God as ἀληθής in 7:26,¹³ and as πνεῦμα in 4:24. The difficulty with the narrative form in John is rather that attributes emerge from the action and can relate to implicit ideas about God.¹⁴ Moreover, the narrative form obviously involves sequence and development in which character and action often unfold.¹⁵ This means important characteristics may be latent at early points.

This calls for interpretative caution, and a recognition that inter-textual references may be illuminating since they may indicate what kind of God or divine attribute John assumes. However, the narrative form also tends to put a premium on construing wider passages than simply individual verses. Such exegesis assumes still greater importance since such predications about God as John does contain are relatively infrequent, and, of course, still require contextualised interpretation.

Obviously, approaching John with the Patristic syntheses in mind risks forcing John into a mould, and becoming deaf to nuances falling outside the framework outlined above. One attractive safeguard is to exegete some lengthy johannine material which falls outside the normal range of reference for those authors examined above. The Bread of Life discourse of John 6:25-71¹⁶ has been selected for this.

¹² Thompson 1997:232, Culpepper 1998:88.

¹³ Compare 3:33.

¹⁴ Thompson 2001:9 rightly notes the importance of implicit ideas about God.

¹⁵ Cf. Culpepper 1998:67 on plot as comprising sequence, causality, unity and affective power.

¹⁶ The question of the Discourse's extent will be dealt with below.

Several reasons underlie this. First, it is relatively underused in the Monarchian and Arian/Homoian controversies.¹⁷ The focus falls rather on the Sabbath dispute of 5:17ff, John 10:30, 14:6-11 and 14:28. It may therefore provide a useful control for Patristic Trinitarian theology. Secondly, John 6 can be seen as further developing themes referred to in chapter 5, notably Moses and Scripture.¹⁸ Hence, if these patristic writers have faithfully understood chapter 5, then one might well find some corroboration of their views in John 6. Thirdly, John 6 is not unrepresentative of the Gospel as a whole, with its motifs of life and the importance of belief.¹⁹ Fourthly, the discourse is quite long and thus suitable. Fifthly, the Discourse contains material dealing with the works of both Father and Son and their relationship. It is therefore apt for elucidating how John avoids those traditional pitfalls of polytheism and modalism. It should be added that the emphasis below will inevitably be on this aspect rather than the extent of sacramental references in the Discourse.²⁰

A final, sixth, factor is the strong use of 'gift' language in the Discourse. This is extremely significant. Thompson valuably comments that 'God' is not a self-interpreting term, even in biblical literature.²¹ Rather one must see how the term is qualified, with whom the 'god' relates and how, and what the 'god' does.²² In terms of John's Gospel it is enormously tempting to fasten on the phrase 'the Father who sent' or equivalents, because this is both striking and prevalent. The concept of the

¹⁷ It is used, of course. The question is one of emphasis.

¹⁸ U. von Wahlde 1981 argues that the witnesses of ch 5:31ff, λόγος, ἔργα, and γραφή are developed in 8:13-59, 10:22-39 and 6:31-59 respectively.

¹⁹ Note the presence of both in the purpose statement of 20:31.

²⁰ Scholarship on this remains divided. Ridderbos notes that the difficulties with a strongly 'sacramental' view are contextual, terminological and theological. 1997:236ff, 240ff.

²¹ Thompson 2001:22. Compare Jn 10:35.

²² Thompson 2001:22ff.

sending Father is indeed reflected in the thought of the writers examined.²³ Further, modern scholarship, particularly after Borgen's work on the *shaliach* concept,²⁴ would see this as an important area and to that extent would recognise some legitimacy behind the patristic emphasis.²⁵ Moreover, the sending motif is present in the Discourse (6:29, 38, 44).

However, another prominent theme is giving, especially giving by the Father. This is highly prominent statistically²⁶ and occurs at significant points in the Gospel's development (notably 3:16ff and the 'high priestly prayer' of chapter 17, as well as chapter 6). This theme is sometimes present in the patristic material, but is strongly present in John 6. John 6 therefore deals extensively with a johannine motif qualifying God and which the patristic arguments flag less strongly. Inevitably one asks if this represents a significant cleavage between John's account of the Father and that of the patristic writers.

8.2. John 6

8.2.1. *Outline and Exegesis*

The temporal markers of 6:1 and 7:1 tend to enclose chapter 6, while within it the incidents of feeding the Five Thousand, walking on water and the Bread of Life Discourse itself appear to follow in rapid succession.²⁷ The Discourse and Feeding are closely tied since the Discourse addresses those who saw the miracle (6:26).

²³ Not least because the Arian/Homoian opponents of some had made such play with it.

²⁴ Borgen 1970.

²⁵ Divine origin for the agent's commission would not in itself preclude the divinity of the agent himself. See L. Hartmann 1978:95.

²⁶ The Father appears as giver some 28 times. He appears as sender (including sender of the Spirit and John the Baptist) some 45 times. Obviously giving and sending may interpret each other.

Thematically, Moses and the events of the Exodus are prominent. The time is Passover (6:4), Jesus is on a mountain-side (6:3), and the miraculous provision of food recalls manna (Exodus 16), a life-giving miracle *par excellence*. The crowd apparently respond along ‘Mosaic’ lines. Some construe the reference to the ‘Prophet’ as picking up the prophet-like-Moses of Deuteronomy 18:15ff,²⁸ and the statement of 6:30 again seems to refer to Moses. If the walking on water of 6:16-21 is taken as reprising the Red Sea miracle,²⁹ this further strengthens associations with Exodus and Wilderness. The crowd (and some disciples) continue the Wilderness themes as they, like the Israelites, grumble (6:41, 61). The question of Jesus’ relation to Moses was, of course, raised in 5:45f, and in some ways chapter 6 clarifies just that. ‘The Prophet’ was also the climax of Jesus’ self-disclosure to the Samaritan woman in 4:26.

Much of the Discourse focuses on Jesus as the bread from heaven, again a description raising the question of origin. Origin issues lie behind the grumbling of 6:41-42. Origin and derivation continue as bones of contention in chapters 7 and 8: in chapter 7 Jesus is under suspicion about the provenance of his teaching,³⁰ while in chapter 8 the dispute highlights paternity,³¹ again a question of origin.

Structurally, much has been made of resemblances in chapter 6 to homiletic patterns,³² in which a text is given, and, after initial exposition, has key elements further developed. This fits the synagogue setting (6:59). The discourse contains the

²⁷ Thus the walking on the water appears later in the day of the feeding (6:16), while the address is to the crowd who had started searching for Jesus the day after the miracle (6:22).

²⁸ So e.g. R. Schnackenburg 1980 II:18, Brown 1971:I:614.

²⁹ E.g. Stibbe 1993:88.

³⁰ Following e.g. Pancaro 1975:91.

³¹ See e.g. Stibbe 1993:97.

somewhat familiar pattern of interjections and reactions. The interjections help propel the discourse into slightly different areas. The interjections first seem favourable (6:34), but progress through grumbling (6:41, 42) to sharp internal debate (6:52). This intensifies in 6:60-70 as the focus moves from the crowd's reactions to the disciples, some of whom move from grumbling (6:60f) to outright desertion (6:66), while the final reference to Judas' betrayal adds an even darker hue. R. Kysar perceptively speaks of the Discourse's 'essentially tragic' movement, as conflict and offence become ever starker.³³

This progression tends to bracket 6:60-70 with 6:25-59. Thematic links intensify this: the same teaching is under discussion, and the themes of the Father's drawing (6:65), and of life-giving (6:63) are repeated. The editorial comment of 6:59 may somewhat mark off what follows,³⁴ but the thematic links nevertheless mean that 6:60-70 comments on the main Discourse. Therefore 6:60-70 will be included here.

Like other johannine dialogues, the Discourse starts with 'discontinuous dialogue',³⁵ as the crowd's question (6:25) about Jesus' return to Capernaum is met by his remarks about why they seek him (6:26). However, 6:22-24 softens the disjunction by stressing the crowd's anxiety to find Jesus.

Verses 26f, though, both confirm the crowd's incomprehension of the sign they have seen (anticipated by Jesus' withdrawal at their decision to 'make' him king 'by force' (6:15)), and also introduce an idea fundamental to what follows, a bread

³² Notably after Borgen's 1965 work.

³³ Kysar 1997:171.

³⁴ If 6:58's reference to the fathers who ate is taken as forming an *inclusio* with 6:31, the demarcation is still stronger. So Ridderbos 1997:244.

enduring to eternal life. This life motif is, of course, central to the Gospel.³⁶ Belief in the Son brings life (e.g. 3:16, 3:33) and life appears in chapter 4 in terms of living water which Jesus will give. Living water is featured in chapter 7, while Jesus the light of the world is glossed in 8:12 as the light of life. The raising of Lazarus concerns life *par excellence* (chapter 11), while chapter 8 warns of the opposite of life, dying in one's sin (8:21, 24),³⁷ put elsewhere as having God's wrath remain on one (3:36). Finally, the Gospel's stated purpose in 20:31 deals with life.

Life, of course, has a double resonance in Old Testament ideas about God. First, God has life while created idols do not,³⁸ and secondly God gives life to his creation.³⁹ Such associations are natural here because of the persistent ties with Israel's Wilderness experiences of God where he provides life for them in the desert, despite their distrust.⁴⁰

The Son of Man is to give this bread enduring to eternal life (6:27). This introduces the giving motif. Here, though, the giver is the Son of Man. The attentive reader will identify this as Jesus,⁴¹ and Jesus as life-giver has just been the subject of intense scrutiny in 5:21ff. However, 5:26 has indicated that Jesus has life in himself, just as the Father has life in himself. Thompson comments this is a remarkable

³⁵ The term is from Stibbe 1993:87.

³⁶ Cf Brown 1971 I:505f.

³⁷ Dying *in sin* is apparently the opposite of life/eternal life, because 8:24 associates dying in sin with disbelief.

³⁸ See e.g. Jer. 10.

³⁹ Compare Thompson 2001:74.

⁴⁰ E.g. the manna incident itself Ex 16:3 and later the demand for water Ex 17:2, repeated on another occasion in Numbers 20:2f. Compare also Numbers 14:3f for the fear that invasion of Canaan will bring death not inheritance.

⁴¹ Especially because of John 1:51, although the Son of Man references of 3:13-15 are quickly glossed in terms of God's Son (3:16-18), who is readily identified as Jesus.

claim,⁴² rightly, since having life in this way is associated with divinity, as is being able creatively to give life.⁴³ This giving by the Son of Man is, however, immediately related to the Father. God the Father sets his seal, that is, authorises,⁴⁴ the Son of Man. This means that the Son of Man does not give life independently of God the Father.

The identity of this bread remains here unspecified, although people should work for it (6:27). This work terminology is picked up in 6:28 as the Jews ask what work God requires.⁴⁵ The transition is not harsh, for Jesus' earlier words about bread that does not perish opens up figurative meanings for bread. J. Pryor argues that Torah and Wisdom were figuratively seen as manna.⁴⁶ The new figurative manna, of course, will prove to be Jesus.

Jesus replies (6:29) that the work God requires is belief in the one he sent. Such belief has already been described as showing that one accepts God is truthful (3:33), thereby demonstrating its importance to God, and one honours the Father by honouring his Son (5:23). Thus God's character and honour are inseparably tied to the Son sent into the world.

Verse 30 challenges Jesus for a vindictory sign and returns to the manna with a quotation resembling Psalm 78:24. This quotation forms the basis for much of what follows. Jesus 'corrects' the quotation at several levels in 6:31-33.⁴⁷ First, the giver is

⁴² Thompson 2001:78f.

⁴³ Thompson 2001:43.

⁴⁴ Following Ridderbos 1997:225, Carson 1991:284.

⁴⁵ See Carson 1991:284.

⁴⁶ Pryor 1992:31.

⁴⁷ Compare his 'correction' in 4:21-23 of the Samaritan woman's comments of 4:20.

not Moses but Jesus' Father. Thus the Father is now portrayed as the life-giver since the bread from heaven is so closely associated with giving life. This further means that the Discourse now envisages the Father (6:32) and the Son of Man (6:27) giving the same thing, the bread of life. Both are givers. The question is how that giving is integrated. Secondly, the giving occurs now (present tense rather than perfect).⁴⁸ This rules out a 'dispensational' view such that the Father gave in the Old Testament but Jesus gives in the New Testament.

Thirdly, this given bread is described as the true bread. This is expanded in 6:33 as the bread of God which descends from heaven and gives life to the world. This comment reminds the reader that the bread from heaven does not arrive independently of God, but derives from him. For the bread's descent 'from heaven', a circumlocution for 'from God', re-inforces the genitive ἄρτος τοῦ Θεοῦ. This relates the life that the Son of Man will give back once more to the Father. Given the conception that God is creator and life-giver this occasions no surprise.

The crowd respond to this description just as the woman had responded in 4:15 when hearing of living water, and ask to be given the bread (6:34). Here Jesus is taken as the giver, notwithstanding the way 6:32f focused on the Father as giver. Jesus answers by identifying the bread of life as himself. After 6:32f this also identifies him as the bread God gives. Jesus' superiority as bread emerges from the statement that he leaves the partaker completely satisfied.⁴⁹ Partaking is explained as 'coming' to Jesus, thus suggesting that this bread is appropriated by faith.

⁴⁸ Following C. Koester 1995:95f. Carson 1991:286 notes this could possibly be a present historic. However, the tense form contrasts with the original citation, and is set in the midst of other corrections.

Faith explicitly returns to the centre (6:29 has already made it important for the Discourse) in 6:36 as Jesus resumes his critical tones of 6:26. Verse 37 then states, first, that ‘everything’ the Father gives to Jesus will come and, secondly, that Jesus will not expel one who comes. This continues the coming-in-faith theme from 6:35-36, but those who come are described as ‘given’ to Jesus by the Father, another act of giving by him, but this time to Jesus. The Father, then, emerges as a giver, not here of the bread of life to the believer, but of the believer to the bread of life. The effectiveness of the giving is underlined by the universality of the ‘everything’ and the certainty of the two future phrases ‘will come’ and ‘will not cast out’.

These two clauses co-ordinate the Father’s giving with the Son’s reception. Jesus expands on this (6:38), commenting that he has come down from heaven to do the will of him who sent him. Personal distinction is highly prominent here given 6:37. It is therefore contextually unattractive to take ‘the will of him who sent me’ as referring to the single will of all three Persons. More straightforwardly, the Father’s will is at stake, supported by the references to will in 6:39-40, especially 6:40 where the will is finally called the will ‘of the Father’, phrasing normally taken to denote personal distinction.

Verse 38 explains how the giving and receiving of believers between the Father and Son is co-ordinated. The action is unanimous, based on the Father’s will. This will receives expansion in 6:39-40. Verse 39 states its content: that Jesus will lose nothing of what the Father has given. The Father’s giving and his will are therefore closely tied. What the Father gives and what Jesus holds are therefore

⁴⁹ Compare Sirach 24:21 on the way one wants only Wisdom after tasting her.

exactly coterminous, matched by the similar correspondence between a person being given and that person coming in faith (6:37). Instead of loss, such a person is raised on the last day, thus clarifying what life the bread brings and picking up the resurrection promise of 5:28f. Verse 40 re-states the resurrection promise in terms of the Father's will that believers will be raised. Hence a person's faith in Christ has been doubly related to the Father: it is a work of God as a work God requires, but also a work showing God has given that person to the Son.

The reaction is murmuring (6:41), an objection to Jesus' claim to be this bread from heaven. As 6:42 shows this constitutes contesting Jesus' heavenly origin, that is, his derivation from God. Jesus both knows, and disapproves, of the objection (6:43) and returns in 6:44 to the theme of 'coming' to him. This is only possible if the Father who sent Jesus draws one. Thus the giving of 6:37-40 is strongly active. The gift is not merely available to Jesus but actively placed in his hands by the Father's drawing. This puts a primacy on the Father's action.

That primacy continues in 6:45 as Jesus takes a second scriptural citation (about the teaching of God) and relates this to belief in himself.⁵⁰ The believer is one who has learned from the Father. Importantly, then, belief/disbelief in Jesus is also an indicator of relation to his Father.⁵¹

However, the Father's primacy does not constitute action independent of Jesus. Unity of action between Father and Son is underscored again in 6:46, here

⁵⁰ Isa 54.13. Some argue this second citation is characteristic of a rabbinic homiletical pattern.

⁵¹ Compare 8:47.

regarding revelation. Jesus denies any vision of God independent of him: he alone has seen the Father.

The following verses (6:47-51) return to the themes that one who believes in Jesus has life, and of Jesus' own identity as the bread of life, in contrast to the bread the fathers ate which could not give life. Jesus adds (6:51) that the bread is his flesh which he gives for the life of the world. This introduces, of course, a new kind of giving: the giver here is the Son who gives his own human life.

This, of course, produces further objections amongst Jesus' audience, now called 'the Jews' (6:52).⁵² Jesus emphasises in 6:53f that his flesh must be 'eaten', intensifying the offence by adding that his blood must be drunk. Only thus can there be resurrection life. After all, Jesus' flesh is true food, and his blood true drink (6:55), which presumably refers to the original distinction between life-giving bread and perishable bread. The one who partakes of Jesus' flesh and blood dwells in Jesus and is indwelt by him (6:56).

Verse 57 associates such indwelling with life. He who 'eats' Jesus will live through (διὰ) him. Strikingly, though, this is compared to Jesus himself living through (διὰ) the Father who sent him. This is consistent with 5:26, which speaks of the Father giving life to the Son. However, the believer does not have life 'in himself', which limits the scope of the comparison. This comparison, though, draws attention to the Father as the ultimate source of life. The Son as bread of life brings life, but life that ultimately traces back to the Father, for the Son himself holds life

⁵² Ridderbos 1997:239 suggests this should be understood as a mutual discussion of 'astonishment and displeasure', rather than implying that some were for, some against Jesus.

through the Father. If the Father had not first (as a logical rather than temporal priority) given life to the Son, the latter would, apparently, have no life to give in turn.

Jesus concludes the Synagogue address in 6:58 by re-asserting the superiority of the bread that descends from heaven over the bread which the fathers ate in the wilderness but still died. After an editorial comment (6:59), the passage moves to those who would, at first glance, be thought more receptive, his disciples (6:60). They too regard Jesus' 'word' as harsh.⁵³ Once again, Jesus is aware (6:61) of the 'grumbling' (a continuity with the main discourse) and responds with an incomplete conditional sentence (6:62) which raises the question of what their reaction would be if they saw the Son of Man ascend to where he was before. This refers, most naturally, to the ascension, which would confirm Jesus' identity and thus his reliability, rather than to the crucifixion. He then speaks of the life-giving Spirit (literally, who makes live: ζωοποιῶν: 6:63). While eminently consistent with the Spirit references of the Nicodemus dialogue (chapter 3), this means chapter 6 has now associated the conferring of life with Father, Son and Spirit. However, the Spirit's life-giving function is closely integrated with the actions of the other Persons. For 6:63 links the Spirit to the words of Jesus, which are themselves depicted as given by the Father to the Son. Jesus' concluding comments to the disciples acknowledge that some do not believe (6:64), while an editorial addition states that Jesus knew both who believed and who would betray him (6:65).

⁵³ The 'harshness' may relate not to the origin of Jesus but to his teaching that he will die. So Ridderbos 1997:245.

This addition is not insignificant. The main discourse showed that belief results from the Father giving to Jesus and ‘drawing’ some-one to Jesus. Jesus’ knowledge here of who believes indicates therefore that he knows whom his Father gives and draws. Jesus does not merely do his Father’s will: he knows its content. This is underlined by 6:65 as Jesus re-states that no-one can come to Jesus in belief without the Father drawing them. This too, however, is described as gift: no-one can come unless it is given to them, literally, out of the Father.⁵⁴ This means that for the believer giving has a double quality: the believer is given to the Son, but the ‘coming’ is given to the believer.

At this, some in Jesus’ audience defect (6:66), while Peter confesses that Jesus has the words of life and is the Holy One of God (6:68f). Once again, Jesus’ life-bringing ministry is joined to his identity as one from God.

Jesus ominously closes the section by predicting that one of the Twelve would betray him, yet even this is put within a framework of divine knowledge and control as he states that he himself chose the Twelve, including his betrayer (6:70). The editorial comment underlines this by pointing out Jesus’ identification of Judas (6:71).

8.2.2. Significant Themes concerning the Father in John 6:25-71

Two points are especially notable about the Father in this Discourse, first, his identity as a giver, and secondly the primacy of his will.

⁵⁴ Compare 3:27, although there the gift is ‘out of heaven’. The ἐκ + genitive construction with a verb of giving is perhaps most naturally taken as indicating source or origin. For ἐκ denoting origin see

The Father emerges as a giver. The place of giving in the structure of Jesus' speech shows its importance. Humans desperately need the bread of life, which the Father gives. Humans feed on the bread of life by 'coming' to it, that is, believing. But belief arises from the Father giving to the Son and to the believer. Life in the Gospel depends on giving.

The giving is, though, manifold. He is the one who both gives the bread of life to 'you' (6:32) and who gives believers to the Son (6:37-40). This coming is also a gift to the believer (6:65). The purpose of this giving is life, a life that ultimately traces back to the Father (6:57). This pluriformity suggests the giving's effectiveness because every aspect of the process of receiving life derives from the Father. The johannine idiom that nothing given will be lost expresses this effectiveness.(6:39).⁵⁵ This naturally leads to a consideration of the will of the Father.

The Father's will is intimately involved in the giving of chapter 6. He gives with a purpose (6:39f), which is benevolent both towards humans (that they enjoy life) and also towards the Son (that he be honoured and adored). Jesus presents his own giving as thoroughly integrated with the Father's, so that Father and Son are not pursuing independent, albeit benevolent, projects towards humanity. Rather both give in one operation a life ultimately traced back to the Father. Jesus, though, locates this one operation in his Father's will, with this relational language suggesting an individuated will of the Father, which he obeys.

Porter 1994:155f.

⁵⁵ Jesus returns to the motif of effectiveness in 10:29f and importantly in 18:9.

8.3. The Giving Motif

Given this review of the Father's giving in chapter 6, the character of the Father's giving more generally falls for examination.

8.3.1. *Giving and its relations*

Of course, the Bread of Life Discourse is not alone in depicting the Father's pluriform giving. This pluriformity also emerges strongly in John 17 in the so-called High Priestly prayer. John 17 is demarcated as discrete by editorial comments of introduction, in 17:1, and of departure, in 18:1. Within that, the prayer can be profitably divided around the various petitionary foci. At its simplest, this produces three divisions, 17:1-5 (on Jesus' glorification), 17:6-19 (for the disciples) and 17:20-26 (for those who believe through the disciples).⁵⁶ However, the Father's giving is present throughout.⁵⁷ The prayer's position at the end of the Upper Room Discourse, just before the arrest and Passion proper, renders it prominent. Its content also attracts attention since it is the most sustained direct address by Jesus to his Father in the Gospel: we 'overhear' the godhead.⁵⁸ Carson notes that in some respects it summarises the Gospel to this point.⁵⁹

Within the first division outlined above (17:1-5), the Father's giving appears first in verse 2, which speaks of the authority given by the Father to the Son. Verse 4 again features a gift by the Father, of work the Son was to do.

⁵⁶ Cp L. Morris 1995:634, J. Marsh 1968:553.

⁵⁷ 17:2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 22, 24.

⁵⁸ Stibbe 1993:178.

⁵⁹ Carson 1991:551.

In the second division (17:6-19), Jesus is once more the beneficiary of the Father's giving as he refers to the Father's giving of specific people out of the world (17:6). Verse 7 repeats that everything the Father has given Jesus is from the Father and that the believers know this. Verse 8 shifts the emphasis slightly to speak of the words given by the Father to Jesus, which he in turn has transmitted. Verse 9 stresses that Jesus prays for those the Father gave him, while verse 11 resumes the giving theme, this time as the name the Father has given (see also 17:12). Giving appears finally in this section in verse 14 where Jesus is the giver, but now of 'your word', something, of course, that verse 8 has already indicated was given to Jesus.

In the third section (17:20-26), giving occurs at verse 22 as Jesus speaks of the glory the Father gave him and which he has given on in turn. In verse 24, the Father's giving of believers re-appears, as does the glory the Father gave the Son.

The Father's giving is as extensive as in chapter 6, if not more so. In chapter 17 he gives glory, words, work, name and believers, and the predominant direct recipient of these gifts is Jesus. He gives on in his turn, and the prayer contemplates a giving to those for whom Jesus prays. The Father's giving is, perhaps, unsurprisingly prominent in a prayer. Prayers characteristically ask for things. Even so, the giving terminology is cast strongly in terms of gifts the Father has already given, specifically, to the Son. The Father's generosity is emphasised in his dealings with his Son.

It is expedient here to return to Augustine's trinitarian account. He characteristically presents the trinitarian role of the Spirit as being Gift.⁶⁰ Positively, this facilitates Augustine's presentation of eternally rooted divine love (for the Spirit's role as Gift is eternal) and his characterisation of God as love.⁶¹ More negatively, this can obscure the extent of the Father's giving to the Son.⁶² Augustine, paradoxically, may under-state the Father's giving by over-concentrating on the Spirit as Gift.

The Father's giving to his Son is linked both to his love and to his will. Thus the Father loves the Son and has given everything into his hands (3:35). This suggests that the giving of believers in chapter 6 also relates to the Father's love for the Son, since they are included in the 'all' God has given his Son. (6:37, 39). Similar patterns occur in 17:24 where Jesus grounds the Father's giving of glory to the Son on the Father's love for the Son before the foundation of the world. Love motivates, so to speak, the Father's giving to the Son.⁶³ Similar motivation prompts the giving of the Son by the Father. The Father gives the Son because he loves the world (3:16).

As for relating giving to will, the review of chapter 6 has already outlined this. The Father gives both Son and believers to fulfil his will. This is supported by the thought that the Son is 'given' works to complete (5:36), which are themselves related to the Father's will (compare 4:34).

Therefore, the Father's giving, will and love are related concepts informing each other, and not mutually exclusive. Hence, altering the understanding of one of

⁶⁰ *DeT* V.12, XV.29, 33-36.

⁶¹ E.g. *DeT* XV.27, 28 and 31.

⁶² Augustine does not dispute other fields of giving. The question is one of emphasis.

⁶³ T. Larrson 2001:247 comments that the Father's love is connected with the giving of gifts.

them may well impact the others too. To abstract love from giving alters the character of the Father's gift. Similarly, to discuss the Father's giving without reference to his will obscures both the purposes of the giving and the Father's place. As related concepts, will and love cannot be taken disjunctively.

Turning to the relation of johannine giving and sending terms, while John's sending language is obviously highly distinctive,⁶⁴ it is nuanced by the giving language.⁶⁵ Thus 3:16 and 3:17 link the giving of the Son with the sending of the Son: his sending is a species of gift. Moreover, the Son is sent both to work (e.g. 4:34) and to bring words (e.g. 12:49), but words and works are things given by the Father (17:4 concerning works and 17:8 concerning words). The purpose of the Son's sending is salvific (3:17), and, in particular, saving belief is related to believing that Jesus is one whom the Father sent (e.g. 6:29 and 17:3). However, such saving belief in the one the Father sent in turn depends on the giving of the Father (6:37, 44f, and 65). Hence, the character, purpose and effectiveness of sending are glossed by giving.

However, as well as having many ways of giving, the Father also gives to different beneficiaries, both believers and the Son. We turn to the Father's gifts to Jesus the Son.

8.3.2. Gifts to Jesus the Son

John's Gospel concerns the giving of life to those who walk in darkness. Jesus, however, traces his own life back to the Father (5:26, 6:57). Within the context of 5:19-30 the giving of life by the Father to the Son is the basis for the Son's giving

⁶⁴ For present purposes nothing turns on putative distinctions between πέμπω and ἀποστέλλω. J. Seynaeve 1977 asserts a distinction. A. Kostenberger 1999 suggests they are virtual synonyms.

of life to believers in his turn. This emerges from the connective γάρ at the start of 5:26, which indicates that 5:26 explains the claims of 5:25. The life the Son has, though, is life-in-himself (ἐν ἑαυτῷ),⁶⁶ paraphrased by Carson as life like God in being a ‘self-existent’ life.⁶⁷

This is significant because Jesus here speaks of something beyond the events of the Incarnation, or events within creation. The granting of authority could conceivably relate simply to creation: the Son has authority over created things, to give life and exercise judgement. Here, though, since the Word, identified as the Son, stands outside the realm of created things (1:1-4), a relation outside creation is in view. The giving of life to the Son is part of the eternal relation between Father and Son. Carson comments:

The impartation of life-in-himself to the Son must be an act belonging to eternity, of a piece with the Father/Son relationship, which is itself of a piece with the relationship between the Word and God.⁶⁸

This differentiates the giving language. It is clear that in the sending the Father gives to the Son in various ways, and the giving of cosmic authority could be related to that. However, the giving of life stands outside that salvation-historical giving. It is nevertheless a giving. This is suggestive. Obviously, much has been made of the sending motifs reflecting the eternal processions of Son and Spirit, but, nevertheless, ‘sending’ is not attributed to the eternal relation between Father and Son. Giving, though, is applied to relations both in the economy and also in eternity. Therefore, the giving motif merits serious consideration as providing a common factor between eternal and economic relations.

⁶⁵ Thompson 1997:225 points out that sending does not alone explain the Sonship relation.

⁶⁶ 1:4 may form a parallel depending on whether the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν is taken with v 3 or v 4.

⁶⁷ Carson 1991:256.

In fact, the eternal giving provides the basis for the Son's own economic giving. The Son's giving of life can be related back to the giving of authority to him over the cosmos by the Father and derives from the Father's eternal giving of life to the Son such that he has it in himself.

Equally striking is the Father's giving of authority. This emerges in several ways. First, the Son gives life to whomever he wishes (5:21), and, of course, the Son as life-giver is a major Gospel theme. The giving of life, though, is an act of divine prerogative, and expressed in authority terms in 17:2:

Καθὼς ἔδωκας αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν πάσης σαρκός, ἵνα πᾶν ὃ δέδωκας αὐτῷ
δώσῃ αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον

This passage shows that Jesus' authority is universal, over 'all flesh', but also indicates that the life-giving prerogative is not exercised independently of the Father. There are not two wills for salvation.

Secondly, authority is given regarding the other great divine prerogative, judgement: see 5:27, which again uses ἐξουσία terminology. The Son indeed has divine authority but as a gift.⁶⁹ Thirdly, John employs language of universal giving: 'everything' or 'each thing' is given to the Son.⁷⁰ This universalising suggests the Son's universal sovereignty over the cosmos (compare, too, 17:2).

Sovereignty also appears, fourthly, in the insistent depiction of Jesus as king, notably in the Trial. Jesus characterises his kingdom as 'not of this world' (18:36),

⁶⁸ Carson 1991:257.

⁶⁹ Compare Culpepper 1998:152 who comments that Jesus' authority comes from the Father.

⁷⁰ 3:35, 6:37, 13:3.

which refers both to its nature and origin.⁷¹ The issue of origin raises once more the derivation of Jesus and his claims.

John also presents the works and words of Jesus as gifts from the Father. This occurs in concentrated form in John 17, where Jesus speaks of the work given to him to complete (17: 4 - compare 5:36), but also says that the Father gave him words (17:8, 14) which he has in turn given to the disciples. As in chapter 6, the Father's giving has a twin aspect. He gives to Jesus both people from the world (17:6) and also the words to give to these people (17:8, 14).

This pattern again integrates the operation of Father and Son patrocentrically, since words and works are ultimately referred back to the Father as the giver. Jesus consistently stresses, of course, that he does not exceed what the Father desires in word or deed. He 'completes' or 'perfects' the works the Father gives (17:4) and teaches what his Father wishes (7:17, 8:26).

There is a final nuance to the giving of words and works to Jesus. On occasion (10:18) the work of laying down his life given can be described by Jesus as a command (ἐντολή), as can the words that Jesus brings (12:49). The latter command is one the Father 'gives'. This element of command integrates Jesus' words and works still more closely with the Father's will.

The prayer of John 17 confirms and explains the pattern found in the Bread of Life Discourse that the Father gives believers to the Son (17:6, 9, 24). Those whom

⁷¹ Brown 1971 II: 853.

the Father gives are ‘out of the world’ (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου: 17:6), and are therefore objects of the world’s hostility (17:14). The Father’s giving of them is glossed in terms of him being one to whom they rightfully belong (17:6 σοὶ ᾗσαν; 17:9 σοὶ εἶσιν). This presupposes they are his in the first instance. This means the Son’s ‘title’ to those who are his derives from the Father’s prior title. If they are not the Father’s to give, then *prima facie* they are not legitimately the Son’s either. Carson remarks on verse 6 ‘Thus in a profound sense they belonged to God antecedently to Jesus’ ministry.’⁷²

8.3.3. *The Father’s gifts to human believers*

Most obviously the Father gives the Son (3:16) and the Spirit (14:16). It is worth observing briefly how closely the Spirit’s work is tied to Jesus’. Just as Jesus’ work is integrated with the Father, so too the Spirit’s work is integrated into the same complex of action towards humans. The Spirit is, of course, another Paraclete, suggesting similar, although not identical, work to Jesus’.⁷³ Crucially the Spirit is the Spirit of the Truth (14:17, 15:26 and 16:13), but the revelation or truth the Spirit brings is profoundly focused on Christ, his words and identity (14:26, 15:26. See also 16:8ff). Since Christ and his words are themselves patrocentric, it follows that the Spirit’s work is likewise patrocentric, and is so through the Son. The gift of the Spirit further exemplifies the Father’s integrated giving.

More subtly, belief itself is characterised as a gift to the believer (6:65). Kysar understandably stresses that chapter 6 features God’s role ‘in originating the faith

⁷² Carson 1991:558.

⁷³ Brown 1971 II:644.

response',⁷⁴ but this origination is a giving, of the believer to Jesus and also of belief to the believer.

The Father can also be said to give himself in that his name, which he gives to the Son (17:11 and 12), is manifested by the Son to believers. 'Name' here surely includes God's identity as Father of the Son, something that only believers know, since only believers accept the Son as Son. Thus Augustine links the manifestation of God's name with the manifestation of the Son ('a name that could not be manifested without the manifestation of the Son himself').⁷⁵ Given that verses 7-8 explain verse 6,⁷⁶ and verse 8 deals with the words the Father has given Jesus, words which consistently centre on his own sonship, Augustine's construction seems apt.⁷⁷

Nevertheless this self-giving of the Father in manifesting his identity of Father has a slightly different quality from the gift of the Son or Spirit. The initiative for the gift lies ultimately in the Father's own will. Certainly the Son's giving of his life can be described as self-giving, but it is also a giving initiated in his Father's will. Finally, the Father is one who gives answers to prayer (15:16 and 16:23). Again this is not independent of the Son, for prayer is in the Son's name.

⁷⁴ Kysar 1997:178.

⁷⁵ *Tractate* 106.4. Chrysostom *Homily* 81 pursues a similar thought.

⁷⁶ So Schnackenburg 1980 II:177.

⁷⁷ Carson 1991:558 includes the identification of Father. Ridderbos 1997:550 fn 224 speaks of God 'as he reveals and makes himself known in action'. But in John this making known is principally as Father. Brown 1971 II:756 sees the name as the 'I AM' given to Jesus. While not unattractive, this may not give full weight to the apparently personal identity hinted at in the repeated references to 'your' name.

8.3.4. *Jesus the Son as Giver*

The Father, of course, is not the only giver in the Gospel. The Son also gives. In particular he gives life, as the bread of life and the resurrection, but he also gives commands to his people (13:34), peace (14:27), revelation (17:8) and glory (17:22). This fundamentally resembles his Father's giving, but the Son's giving is informed by his Father's will. His giving is, grounded in the prior giving of the Father.

8.4. The Doctrine of God Implied by God as Giver

The Father as the great giver suggests several important things. First, the Father emerges as all-powerful. That he can give all to the Son (e.g. 13:3) implies he rules all. This is clearest when those believers given to the Son are said to be the Father's (17:6 and 9). Notably his gift to the Son includes not only giving life (17:2), but judgement over humanity (5:22). This suggests the ability to command effectively, which the Father must first have himself before he can vest it in the Son. The giving of rule presupposes a rule to give.

Other features support this view of the Father's sovereignty. Thus John 10:29 tells us that nothing can seize anything from the Father's hand. Further, the reliability of the words the Father gives, either directly to the incarnate Son or in the Scriptures, is stressed. John 18:9 underlines that the Son lost none that the Father gave,⁷⁸ and at several points John is anxious to emphasise the fulfilment of scriptural words. This is especially evident in the crucifixion narrative,⁷⁹ exactly when one might otherwise

⁷⁸ It may be objected that this relates rather to the keeping of Jesus' word. Yet it should be recalled that Jesus says that he speaks what his Father has given him to speak. The word finally derives from the Father.

⁷⁹ 19:24, 28 and 36f.

suspect God was not in control. As it is, these instances of fulfilment indicate the truth of the claim that power had been ‘given’ to Pilate from on high (19:11).

Naturally, biblical presentations of God underline his truthfulness. The ability to speak truthfully, or effectively, about the future distinguishes God from false gods. Lincoln remarks of Isaiah 40-55 that Yahweh is decisively vindicated by the ‘effective fulfilment of [his] word...’⁸⁰ God can speak truth because he is sovereign.

Indirectly, too, the Father’s sovereignty emerges from the victory the Gospel describes over the devil. Twelftree remarks that Jesus’ whole ministry is ‘a battle with Satan’.⁸¹ This battle is decisively won at the Cross,⁸² a victory claimed in 12:31f, and vindicated in the resurrection. This victory, however, is of the Father’s will, and Jesus ‘fights’ with what the Father gives him.

Secondly, the Father emerges as generous. Giving involves no contractual *quid pro quo* and so suggests a certain spontaneity and graciousness in the giver. The Father as generous giver needs qualification, though. This appears to be his eternal characteristic rather than one which is confined to salvation-history and therefore contingent or secondary. For giving life to the Son to have ‘in himself’ (5:26) is an eternal giving. Furthermore, the Father’s generosity is emphasised by the scale of his giving. He gives in various ways, for example, cosmic rule to his Son, and life to those who need it through the giving of his Son’s human life. He gives to various groups, his Son and those whom he draws out of the world. This is related, of course, to the way love is entwined in the Father’s giving (3:16 and 3:35).

⁸⁰ Lincoln 2000:40.

⁸¹ Twelftree 2001:141.

This is especially evident in his giving of the Son, which is the giving of life. This rests on no prior merit in the donees, but rather on their need as those who otherwise walk in the darkness of death. There, loving generosity is gracious and unconditional.

These characteristics of sovereignty and generosity eminently cohere with characteristics evident in the OT.⁸³ There Yahweh also emerges as a giver. He is a giver of life (e.g. Ezra 9:9, Psalm 21:4, 80:18, 119:40, 107, 154, 156), notably of offspring (e.g. Genesis 17:16), of judgement (e.g. Psalm 78:50, 118:18), of wisdom and revelation (e.g. 1 Kings 4:29, Daniel 2:23), of his Spirit (e.g. Nehemiah 9:20, Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26), and of inheritance (e.g. Genesis 24:7). Further, critically, God gives sovereignty and authority, both in secular rule (e.g. Daniel 4:17, 27 and 31) and eternally (Daniel 7:14). God's king is also a gift (Isaiah 9:6). Such widespread patterns are rightly traced back to God as 'the only true owner of all creation' who therefore has sovereign rights of disposal.⁸⁴ These categories overlap substantially with giving in John and assume a similar ability to give.

However, sovereignty and generosity characterise the Son as well as the Father. Here Thompson's observation that usurping divine prerogatives invites censure for blasphemy is very pertinent indeed.⁸⁵ It now falls to consider how blasphemy is avoided in the Gospel.

⁸² So G. Burge 1987:73f. He argues that the focal point of the battle is Satan's denial of Jesus' identity.

⁸³ See also Lincoln 2000:185 to the effect that the Gospel presupposes the world of Jewish scripture.

⁸⁴ C. Labuschagne 1997:788ff.

⁸⁵ Thompson 2001:43.

8.5. Joint Operation

It is here expedient to renew consideration of joint operation.

8.5.1. Joint Words and Works

The words and works of Jesus are presented as things given him by the Father. Jesus' works do not merely resemble the Father's in scale, nor are his words simply genuine revelation. They are also works and words that the Father has commissioned or given the Son to do.

Thus, Jesus' acts of wonder can be associated with the Father as well as Jesus. The healing of the man born blind illustrates this. Answering the question (9:2) whether the man or his parents had sinned that he should be born blind, Jesus instead says (9:3) that it was that God's works might be manifested in him. This introduces the subsequent action not as an independent work of Jesus, but as a work of God. Jesus' further comment (9:4) strengthens this, namely that 'we'⁸⁶ must do the works of the one who sent Jesus. God's identification with the action is emphasised again when the healed man states (9:31) that God hears one who reverences him and does his will. The idea of doing God's will is present in both 9:4 and 9:31.

The raising of Lazarus similarly associates the Father with the work. In 11:4 Jesus states that Lazarus' illness is for God's glory and also for the glory of the Son, in fact hinting that the glory of each is in the glorification of the other. Jesus returns to God's glory in 11:40 and this imbues Lazarus' subsequent resurrection with the sense

⁸⁶ The plural is most obviously taken as Jesus associating the disciples in his work (see e.g. Brown 1971 I:372, Carson 1991:362, Ridderbos 1997:333f).

that it is God's glory. This is re-inforced by 11:41f in which Jesus addresses the Father and states that the Father has heard him. The summoning of Lazarus from the tomb (11:43) then is partly depicted as the Father answering prayer. Brown captures this well:

Because his prayer is heard, they will see a miraculous work which is the work of the Father. Through the exercise of the power of Jesus which is the power of the Father, they will come to know the Father and thus receive life themselves.⁸⁷

Carson, amongst others, rightly relates Lazarus' coming forth to the claims of 5:25 and the Son's summoning of the dead.⁸⁸ In this sense the raising of Lazarus conforms to the pattern outlined in 5:19ff of power given by the Father.

More generally, the great works of divine prerogative, giving life and exercising judgement, are portrayed essentially as works of both Father and Son. Thus, the Son gives life, and this life is ultimately traceable to the Father, who fully intends it be given by the Son to believers (see chapter 6). Augustine's description is apt: this is an inseparable operation.⁸⁹ As for judgement, this is given wholly to the Son (5:22), but its genuineness rests on Jesus' identification with the Father (8:16). There is apparently one judgement, by the Son at the delegation of the Father and according to his will. Therefore, the divine prerogatives are exercised as a unity.

Similarly with the words that Jesus brings. These are not simply accurate remarks of one who knows about the Father, although Jesus does possess such otherwise hidden knowledge (1:18, 3:13, 6:46). Rather the Father has given Jesus words to say so that Jesus' words are also the Father's words (7:16, 8:26 and 28, 17:8). This means that belief or disbelief in the Son is also an index of belief about

⁸⁷ Brown 1971 I:436.

the Father: the one who accepts the testimony of the Son has ‘sealed’ that God himself is truthful (ἀληθής) (3:33).

8.5.2. Joint Operation and Indwelling

However, joint operation in John is not merely a case of two independent individuals co-operating, but reflects relations between the Father and Son, in particular their mutual indwelling. This emerges in two passages. First in 10:37-39, part, of course, of the sequence in which the unity claim of 10:30 occurs. The Jews demand to know if Jesus is the Christ (10:24). Jesus responds (10:25) that testimony already exists in the works he has done in his Father’s name. The problem is that the audience do not believe. Thus, from the start of the unit, works have been introduced, and specifically in relation to the Father. The focus on works resumes in 10:32, as Jesus responds to preparations to stone him. Jesus again characterises the works in relation to the Father, here as works ‘from’ (ἐκ) the Father. They are also described as good. The crowd reply (10:33) that they are not trying to stone him for any good work he has done, but because he has blasphemed, and ‘made’ himself God’s Son.

This reply merits attention. First, it presupposes some difference between Jesus’ works and words. They are here responding to what Jesus has just said in 10:30, not to what he has done. Their repetition of the adjective ‘good’ may even tacitly concede that he has done good works, which would imply that while the works may have been good, the words were not. Even if there is no such tacit concession, it remains that they focus on his words rather than his works. Secondly, however, ‘the

⁸⁸ Carson 1991:418.

⁸⁹ Not just between Father and Son, of course. The Spirit too is portrayed as life-giving.

Jews' fasten only on part of Jesus' description of his works. He twice relates those works in this section to his Father (10:25 and 10:32). They are paternal works. This characterisation aligns the works with the words expressing the paternal claim, and does not separate them, as 'the Jews' have done.

In 10:34-36, after citing a Scriptural example of calling created beings 'god', Jesus returns to the objections to his words: they say he has spoken blasphemy. He answers this in the climactic verses to this section,⁹⁰ 10:37-38, and turns once more to the works. These are again depicted as the Father's. This is sharply juxtaposed to the claim in words to be God's Son (10:36). Jesus indicates that the works and words have the same character. The words state that Jesus is the Son. The works are those of Jesus' Father. Both have the Father-Son relationship in view.⁹¹ Believing the works, then, means (10:38) believing and knowing something about the Father-Son relationship, namely that it features the mutual indwelling of Father and Son. The works reveal the mutual indwelling of Father and Son.

This pattern of words and works recurs in 14:8-11. Philip asks to be shown the Father (14:8), adopting Jesus' terminology of 'Father'. Philip may have accepted there is a Father, but his request for revelation of that Father stands at odds with Jesus' final remark of 14:7 'you have seen him',⁹² and shows that Philip has not fully accepted Jesus' words.

⁹⁰ They are climactic because they are the final contribution to debate. The scene changes in 10:40, after a renewed desire once to stone Jesus (10:39a), which he evades (10:39b).

⁹¹ Similarly Culpepper 1998:94 concludes that the words and signs alike point to the Father: this can only be through the Father-Son relation.

⁹² As Ridderbos 1997:494 notes.

Jesus' response (14:9) indicates that Philip's request was unnecessary and lacked full knowledge of Jesus. The shortcomings in Philip's belief are then specified (14:10a): he should believe that Father and Son indwell each other. This implies that if he grasps this mutual indwelling he will realise that he has seen the Father. Mutual indwelling of Father and Son, then, indicates that the believer has seen the Father in the Incarnation. Ridderbos rightly speaks of the indwelling formula as implying reciprocal 'immanence'.⁹³ In Augustinian terminology, the Father and Son are never without each other, including in the economy.

It is, then, natural for Jesus to explain this reciprocal immanence in terms of the words and works of the Incarnation. His words (14:10b) are not simply from himself, but, as earlier discussion indicated, are given by the Father. In 14:10c Jesus returns to the works. Now, and very strikingly, he says that the Father does his works while abiding in Jesus. In 14:11 reciprocal indwelling is once again related to believing in the works. The works reveal mutual indwelling.

The statement of 14:10c is, perhaps, a high water mark for joint operation in John. The works here are 'his', that is, the Father's, and the operator is now directly said to be the Father: he is the subject of ποιεῖ. These things are so, because he abides in the Son.

This has several important consequences. First, 14:10c closely associates the Father-Son relationship with economic operation. This provides textual support for Augustine's proposition that inseparable relation entails inseparable operation.

⁹³ Ridderbos 1997:495.

Secondly, the incarnate Son does not merely bring information about a perichoretic relation outside space and time. Rather mutual indwelling is also realised through the works of the Son which are also the works of the Father indwelling him.⁹⁴ Thirdly, Jesus' consistent position that treatment of him constitutes treatment of the Father is all the more intelligible.⁹⁵ Fourthly, perichoretic indwelling renders impossible notions that the Son is a second power usurping the Father's place.⁹⁶ This brings us to the Father's monarchy.

8.6. The Monarchy of the Father

Jesus claims the divine prerogatives of giving life and exercising judgement. This could readily resemble a polytheistic (and therefore blasphemous) framework of multiple divine rulers. Yet, the giving motif forbids this interpretation. The Father has given all authority to the Son and the Son consistently acknowledges this. His claim to authority rests precisely on deriving title from his Father. Furthermore, he acknowledges that his life-in-himself, too, is given by the Father.

It has been stressed that the Father acts through the Son and the Son's authority over the cosmos is derived. Without that derivation, and to that extent subordination, of the Son's authority to the Father, several features in the presentation of Father and Son become attenuated. If the Son's authority in the cosmos is underived, then the Son appears to reign independently in a cosmic dyarchy, and God's monarchy disappears. *Prima facie*, this is polytheistic. Moreover, the Incarnation as grounding divine revelation becomes highly problematic. For the principle to which the Son himself appeals as the basis for his cosmic authority has

⁹⁴ Compare Appold 1976:102.

⁹⁵ It is striking that hatred of him is hatred of God (15:23 and 25).

been rejected. This seems odd. If the Son reveals at all that he holds a cosmic monarchy then it seems perverse to reject the basis on which he legitimates it.

Oddities are equally apparent for the Father if the Son's derived authority is rejected. If the Son reigns independently of the Father, how does the Father exercise his own cosmic monarchy? Nor are effects confined to the Father as monarch. For he shows his love by giving all authority to the Son (3:35). If no such gift has been made, the Father's love is correspondingly less apparent. This risks obscuring the character of the Father's love towards the Son. Moreover, this issue of dyarchy has soteriological implications. Granted that the Son has a non-derived authority, does this extend to offering a salvation effective against the Father?⁹⁷ The johannine thrust of inseparable operation means that the salvation achieved by Jesus is also the salvation given by the Father. But the denial of derivation apparently excludes such an inseparable operation.

As it is, the Father's giving means the relation between Father and Son is typical of ideal father-son relations. Ideally, the Father provides life and inheritance for his son.⁹⁸ Typically also the father-son relation is not one of mutual submission or equality of authority: the ideal ethical pattern is for the son to obey the father.⁹⁹ John mirrors this, since the Son insists his words and works are the performance of his Father's will.¹⁰⁰ Jesus simply does not explain his words and works in terms of agreement with the Father, but as implementing his Father's will.

⁹⁶ Compare the useful account of what constitutes blasphemous affront to God in Thompson 2001:43.

⁹⁷ Compare the soteriological questions of Marcion's two gods.

⁹⁸ So Thompson 2001:58 on OT patterns of fatherhood.

⁹⁹ Thompson 2001:62 '...[T]his is not a democratic relationship of peers.'

Several observations can be made. First, taking the references to will as referring to the single will of the Trinity sits uncomfortably with those texts featuring personal distinction, either with the distinguishing term 'Father' (6:38 as glossed by 6:40), or by referring to the Father's distinct activity as sender (4:34, 5:30). Secondly, taking the references to the Son's performance of the Father's will as relevant for the Incarnation only is likewise inadequate. The words and works done at the Father's will instantiate the perichoretic indwelling of Father and Son (10:37f, 14:10c). If that perichoretic indwelling were different from what the Incarnation manifests, the Incarnation would not itself demonstrate the Father indwells the Son: Philip would not have seen the Father. The price, therefore, for asserting that the obedience is only for the Incarnation is the denial that it reveals the divine relations as Jesus claims it does. It severs the economic from the immanent Trinity.

Such a severance would be problematic anyway. There must be some rationale for asserting that the Incarnational obedience of the Son does not reflect the immanent relations. But what is it? If there is such a rationale, clearly the presupposition is that we have decisive information about the immanent Trinity by which we can weigh what the Incarnation reveals. Not only does John speak directly against such a presupposition (1:18, 3:13, 6:46), but this renders the Incarnation superfluous as revelation. Thirdly, to deny the obedience of the Son risks instating the Son's actions as in principle independent. This approaches an 'Olympian' model of divine operation, in which independent deities have distinct spheres of operation.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ 4:34, 5:30 and 6:38.

¹⁰¹ Leftow 1999:237.

Not all, however, would characterise the Son's performance of his Father's will as obedience.¹⁰² Thus Thompson observes that the word 'obey' is never actually used. However, she resorts to such terms when she comments:

The Son's obedience to the Father does not establish their unity, nor is it an obedience construed in terms of submission to an alien command.¹⁰³

Moreover, terms normally translated as 'obey' are not used in John of human relations to either Son or Father. Yet what is decisive is not the presence of the term but the concept, and the concept of obedience is found in human relations with the Son. The Son gives commandments (13:34), but this is just what the Father does to the Son (12:49).

Moving to Thompson's observation that obedience does not constitute the divine unity, it is true that the one-ness of John 10:30 is not something once absent but then actualised by the Son's obedience. However, the pattern of inseparable operation suggests that the unity evidenced by the mutual indwelling of Father and Son is one where the Son conforms to the Father's will.

Nor is this happily conceived as obedience to an alien command. In the johannine context, while the Father's will appears distinctly from the Son, the inseparable indwelling of Father and Son means that the Son does not obey an external and independent Person. The Father is what he is in relation to the Son. Athanasius distinguished the Father-Son relation from one of externality on just this basis. Thus the relation of Father and Son reflects the biblical ideal not just in paternal

¹⁰² Others obviously ~~are~~ ^{would}. B. Longenecker 1994:486 sees obedience as central to sonship throughout the Gospel accounts. M. De Jonge 1977:133 makes the point that the Son obeys in the works in John.

¹⁰³ Thompson 2001:95.

provision for the Son, but also in paternal authority over the Son and his filial obedience. This fits the Gospel's more general handling of what sonship implies.¹⁰⁴

8.7. Mutuality and Asymmetry in the Father/Son relation

John strongly portrays a mutual relationship between Father and Son. Mutuality appears in two notable ways, the desire of each to glorify the other and reciprocal love.

Jesus characterises himself as seeking the glory of his sender (7:18; and 12:28), and yet also as the one whom his Father seeks to glorify (8:50, 54 and 17:5). Their glory is joined in that, for example, the work of Lazarus' raising glorifies them both (11:4) and their glory is mutually dependent in that the Son glorifies the Father that the Father may glorify him (17:1). Similarly, the Father wills that the Son be honoured, such that to dishonour the Son dishonours the Father (5:23).

In fact the glory of both is intimately related to Jesus' 'hour' as he undergoes the Cross. Thus the Father's glory is associated by Jesus in 12:28f with his hour of the Cross, but Jesus' hour is also associated with his own glory (17:1). This is intelligible on the basis that, just as their operation is joint and single, so too is their glory.

Another important area of mutuality is love. The Father loves the Son (3:35) and the Son loves the Father (14:31). Yet, although mutual, the love is asymmetrical in that the Father's love for the Son is joined to his giving to the Son, notably the gift of 'all things' (3:35). The Son's love for the Father is shown in doing what the Father

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 10 on true and false sonship in John.

commands (14:31). This is to be expected generally in father-son relations: fathers and sons show love, but in asymmetrical ways, and specifically filial love is manifested by obedience to one's father.

This has an important consequence. To overlook this giving in the Father's love actually distorts the relation the Father has. It is tantamount to saying he is not properly Father. Sovereign giving is just how the Father is characterised. Similarly, to overlook the obedient nature of the Son's love distorts the filial relation the Son has. It implies that he is not properly Son.

8.8. Conclusion

John's Gospel provides an ultimately patrocentric account of God that is christologically focused. The Father emerges vitally as giver, giving to the Son and giving the Son, and giving the Spirit too. In this giving he is implicitly sovereign (it is all his to give and the giving is for his purposes), and explicitly loving.

This giving implies patrocentricity because one is led to look to the source from which the Son derives what he is and has. It does not imply the Son's ontological inferiority since he has life in himself as the Father does, and has the same divine prerogatives of giving life and exercising judgement as the Father.

This patrocentricity also deflects polytheistic interpretations, for the Son's activity is consistently related to the Father as work which the Father wills for the Son and which he does with him. This inseparable operation reflects an inseparable, mutual, indwelling. This patrocentricity can be described in terms of derivation.

Obviously the ἐκ language supports this. However, it can, and should, be supplemented by the equally johannine stress on the other side of the coin, the giving of the Father. One reason why this is desirable is that giving stresses the personal element in relation. Derivation alone does not necessarily do this.

The trinitarian picture this creates is of distinct Persons who mutually indwell each other and act both distinguishably and as a unity. Their relations are characterised by mutual glorification and love, yet the love is asymmetrically expressed, by the Father's giving and the Son's obedient receiving - for he receives and exercises his cosmic monarchy as the Father wills. In this the Father conforms to the ideal of fatherhood, and the Son to true sonship.

Believers are given a part in this trinitarian pattern of giving. Eternally the Father gives life-in-himself to the Son and gives further to the Son by granting him authority, including the authority to give life, which the Son does to those the Father gives him. Believers are then, appropriately for adopted children, recipients of the Father's giving, but are also objects the Father gives in his eternally giving relationship with his Son.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.1. The Contribution of the Fathers in the Light of the Initial Questions

The survey undertaken has, of course, substantial limits simply because so few patristic theologians have been examined. It should also be said that even the Fathers examined here are not completely unanimous - an outstanding example is the insistence by Tertullian and others that Old Testament theophanies are manifestations of the Son as against Augustine's critique of this position. Equally, the survey here discloses that these theologians are not always internally consistent. Tertullian's conception of sonship as a relation that begins in time is open to substantial criticism, even though his system has the resources elsewhere to solve this difficulty (Proposals 3(g) and (h)). Likewise Origen provides several accounts of Personal distinction (Proposal 4(b)), two of which (that the Father alone is *autotheos* and the analogies of how two may be one) create real difficulties: proposals 4(c)-(d) and (h)-(i). Problems arise with Augustine, too, where some of his responses to Homoian/Arian objections detract from his fundamental principles of inseparable yet distinct operation and personal relation (Proposal 7(h)).

Nevertheless, certain features recur amongst these theologians. First, there is a consistent emphasis on the importance of revelation and of revelation in the Incarnation in particular (Proposals 3(f), 4(e), 5(e), 6(d) and 7(j)). This inevitably tends to tie the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity, in that human beings only know the immanent Trinity through the economy. For Tertullian and Athanasius this is particularly closely tied to the idea that God is truthful.

Secondly, trinitarian considerations are consistently related to other theological *loci*. Strikingly, there is little evidence of a division between the areas of classical theism (what one might call the topics of *de deo uno*) and trinitarian thought (*de deo trino*). Instead the areas are set in conjunction. Tertullian's account is of a cosmic monarchy in which the triune God alone is uncreated (Proposal 3(a)). Origen is highly concerned to relate trinitarian considerations to simplicity, eternity and incorporeality (Proposals 4(c) and (e)). Athanasius analyses trinitarian questions in the light of unchangeable and uncompounded simplicity on God's part, values closely related to his uncreatedness (Proposal 5(a)). For Hilary, trinitarian theology turns on the character and nature of the Father from whom the Son is begotten, and Hilary presents him as a fully self-authoring being, again a view tied closely to his uncreatedness (Proposals 6(b) and (e)). Augustine, likewise, constantly works through his account of substantial and relational predications about God from the point of view of the simplicity and unchangeableness of the uncreated creator (Proposal 7(k)). In this way, all five writers draw on the tradition of biblical monotheism in which God is presented as the incomparable one who is uncreated creator of all (cp. Proposal 2(b)).

Thirdly, these theologians stress (admittedly to varying extents) the significance of trinitarian theology, notably in respect of revelation and salvation (Proposals 3(j), 4(e), 5(g), 6(c), 7(l)). By relating revelation in the economy so closely to basic trinitarian questions, these theologians advocate approaches similar to those evident in Rahner's dictum.

Fourthly, a nexus of topics is consistently present, albeit articulated with some different emphases. This nexus could be put in terms of filial derivation, inseparable

persons and inseparable operation. It is striking that with regard to this nexus Augustine emerges more as one who develops earlier Nicene theology rather than as one who displaces it (Proposal 7(m)). To the elements of this nexus we now turn.

9.1.1. Filial Derivation

A pattern of filial derivation is consistently found in that each stresses that the Son derives all he is and has from the Father (Proposals 3(c), 4(e), 5(c), 6(g) and 7(i)). For Tertullian this is especially evident in explicit terms of ‘monarchy’ fully delegated by the Father to the Son, although Tertullian, like his successors, also envisaged the Son as deriving by generation from the Father. In this way a derivation pattern is used to account both for the eternal relations, and also for the Son’s role in the economy of the created cosmos as monarch.

The derivation pattern ensures several things.

1. It rebuts the thesis of a ‘solitary God’, for derivation necessarily involves plurality (Proposals 3(c), 4(g), 5(b), 6(h) and 7(b)).
2. It rebuts the charge of polytheism in two ways. After all, the Son is not external to the Father (a key reflection in Athanasius and Hilary: proposals 5(c) and 6(i)), for the Father himself is indivisible. Derivation therefore militates against a division between the two that would constitute ditheism. Moreover, the derivation is a filial derivation, a relation of sonship. As Son, the Son is of the same nature as his Father (Proposals 3(c), 5(b), 6(f) and 7(c)).¹ Derivation therefore grounds an ontological equality.

¹ Origen’s treatment of the Son as image suggest this too (Proposals 4(e)-(g), but this is complicated by other competing accounts of personal distinction in his theology (Proposals 4(b) and (j)).

3. As filial derivation, there is an individuated personal distinction between Father and Son. The two Persons are individuated because their relation is asymmetrical. There are not two Fathers, nor two Sons.
4. This means that the pattern of filial derivation tends to create a patrocentric thrust. This is inevitable: since the Son takes all he is from the Father, attention is drawn back to the Father.

However, at first blush it could seem as though derivation stands at odds with perichoretic ideas. Rather, though, derivation starts to provide the foundation for an account of perichoresis or circumincession. This is especially clear in the case of Hilary, for whom the ‘of’ language (associated with derivation) grounds the ‘in’ language (associated with perichoresis): proposal 6(g). Perichoresis arises from what the Son derives from the Father and is to that extent contoured by that derivation. The in-dwelling is not simply of two eternal persons who are interchangeable. That would be an in-dwelling equivalent to two Fathers mutually in-dwelling, or two Sons mutually in-dwelling. Rather it is an indwelling of the Son by the Father from whom he derives, and vice versa. While the in-dwelling is genuinely reciprocal, it is reciprocal between persons in an asymmetric relationship. Thus the derivation pattern provides for an integration of perichoresis with the asymmetric pattern of Father-Son. Perichoresis does not negate the relational asymmetry.

In this way the pattern of filial derivation provides the grounds finally for a filial obedience or reverence on the part of the Son towards the Father (Proposals 3(i), 4(f),² 5(b) and (d), 6(k) and 7(i)). The filial nature of the relationship means that

² The presence of several other accounts of distinction in Origen would not necessarily affect this point.

obedience does not denote inequality of nature (Augustine is explicitly faced with this idea and denies it), but rather is a necessary concomitant of filiality (Hilary is especially clear on this). The implication of this is that an account of the Father-Son which did not include the Son's obedience would for these theologians have been a defective Sonship. Naturally, the obedience aspect of the Son's relation underlines the patrocentricity of the derivation pattern. It is clear at this point that that part of the original charge suggesting that ethical subordination of the Son to the Father was a modern innovation is unfounded.

9.1.2. Inseparability of Persons

Also associated with derivation and perichoresis is the notion of inseparability of Persons. All five theologians stress inseparability at the personal level, in particular because there can be no Father unless there is a Son (Proposals 3(d), 4(g), 5(d), 6(i) and (l) and 7(b)). It should be stressed that the asymmetricality of a derived relationship helps preserve individuated distinctions between the Persons, while the divine nature in which derivation takes place ensures that derivation does not amount to division. In this way, as noted above, derivation helps to resist inclinations to polytheism.

9.1.3. Inseparable Operation

Polytheism is a problem not just at the level of immanent Persons, however. It can also arise through the pattern of operation in the economy. It is noticeable that at some level all five writers endorse a unity or inseparability of operations (Proposals 3(d), 4(f), 5(d), 6(l) and 7(d)). This is especially important, of course, in the field of creational activity. Since divine sovereignty is so closely associated with creating, an

account of the Trinity in which only one of the three Persons created would tend to undercut the idea that there was one majesty. Instead the pattern could readily assume Marcionite proportions. Inseparable operation, therefore, goes hand in hand with the stand against polytheism. Conversely, accounts of divine operation which allocate particular spheres of action or history to one or other of the Trinitarian Persons (e.g. creation to the Father, salvation to the Son or post-Ascension history uniquely to the Spirit) start to appear from this viewpoint as incipiently polytheist.

It is discernible that accounting for inseparable operation becomes increasingly important, culminating in Augustine's recurrent descriptions. Augustine's fundamental trinitarian framework is of two pairs of ideas: inseparability and distinction on the one hand, and temporal action and eternal relation on the other. This framework is insufficiently observed. This is unfortunate since it reveals that Augustine is indeed developing earlier thought (Proposal 7(m)). The theological value of Augustine's account of inseparable operation is that it ensures that perichoretic inseparability at the personal level is indeed fully revealed in the Incarnation. Thus, it does not deny but follows through the thinking in Rahner's dictum. The theological problem linked with inseparable operation is that, arguably, it obscures the distinctions between the Persons, rendering the Trinity of speculative interest only.

Again, though, consideration of the Son as deriving from the Father begins to offset this. The Son characterises his work as derived from the Father in the sense that it is work the Father has given him to do and which he does in filial obedience. All five theologians may present an inseparable operation but it is one in which the participation by each Person is asymmetrical, reflecting their eternal relations. If the

operation of the Son, for example, was simply independent, or did not embody the contours of his filiality, then the link between the economic and the immanent risks attenuation.

Accordingly, the views outlined in the introduction:

1. that a relation of ethical submission in the Father-Son relationship is polytheistic (Bilezikian);
2. that inseparable operation in the economy is detrimental to a full-orbed doctrine of distinct trinitarian Persons (Moltmann); and
3. that Augustine represents a departure in some sense from authentic Nicene and post-Nicene thought,

are alike shown to be misconceived. The nexus surrounding filial derivation, in which inseparable Persons operate inseparably in a perichoretic but asymmetrical relationship, has the resources to provide an account preserving biblical notions of divine unicity and personal distinction. In this picture, Augustine's stress on inseparable operation is a developed articulation which resists polytheistic tendencies and which preserves the distinction of the Father's *principium*. Here, at any rate, he stands in continuity with his predecessors. However, this inevitably raises the question whether that account is as consonant with the biblical data as the Fathers would have wished.

9.2. The Contribution of the Fathers in the Light of the Johannine Material

Obviously these five Fathers are strongly indebted to the Gospel of John, and the stress of Hilary and Augustine in particular on John chapter 5 is justifiable in view of its structural importance. Further, they produce accounts of derivation closely

corresponding to the johannine language of origin and sending, a motif similarly identified as important by modern scholarship. To that extent they capture a crucial component of the Gospel. For the sending motif tends to create the same patrocentric emphasis as is present in their synthesis.

This is re-inforced by the account of joint operation in the Gospel. Ultimately the works and words of Jesus are also works and words of the Father. Their joint operation reflects and reveals the Father's indwelling of the Son (see especially John 14:10: proposal 8(h)). In this way the economic and the immanent are linked and the patristic stress on joint operation, finally fully expressed by Augustine, again captures a johannine note. However, this joint operation of Father and Son is one in which the Father enjoys a certain primacy - the Son does the Father's will (Proposal 8(g)). The operation may be joint, but participation is asymmetrical. Again, though, this asymmetrical participation is present in these patristic accounts. In this respect the patristic account is far closer to the Gospel's understanding of the Father's relation to the Son than Moltmann's account of 'abba' involving intimacy but not authority.

Nevertheless, in John the asymmetrical participation in joint operation is signalled by the terms of giving: the Father gives works and words to the Son. This takes us to the question of giving in John. For, it is strongly arguable that the johannine language of giving by the Father is under-represented in these theologians. Such terms are certainly present, but are not used to the extent that they are in the Gospel, and indeed, in the case of Augustine, they are used in areas which serve to limit the full extent of the Father's giving as presented in John.

For johannine giving covers both economic and immanent areas (Proposal 8(c)) and re-inforces the relation between economic and immanent. The Father behaves towards his Son in the economy as he does in eternity: he gives to him. This also underlines the consistency between God's trinitarian life and his relation towards his creation: for the Father gives to his creation, too. To that extent the Father is not different in eternity from what he is in the economy of creation. This provides a material content to Rahner's dictum.

However, this pattern of giving is again patrocentric (Proposal 8(f)). Notably, Jesus traces his life-in-himself and his rule back to the Father's gift.³ As gifts, one looks to the giver. This is completely consistent with the patrocentricity arising from the patristic stress on filial derivation. Nevertheless, the johannine giving motif nuances our understanding of derivation. First, the patrocentricity is intensified by the scale of the Father's giving, notably with salvation itself being traced back to the various gifts of the Father, of the Son to believers, of believers to the Son, of belief to believers, of the Spirit to believers. The Father's giving is pervasive and ubiquitous.

Secondly, the patrocentricity receives its character from the stress on giving. Obviously, giving tends to underline the personal rather than impersonal relation of the Father towards the Son. Since the Father gives life to the Son, the impersonal quality that could lurk simply in the terms of derivation or origin is negated. The traditional images of light and radiance or spring and stream likewise do not necessarily involve the personal quality that gift does. More than this, giving suggests

³ Compare K. Tanner 2001:39 who likewise stresses the giving by the Father to the Son and Spirit. She cites Hilary of Poitiers *DeT.* VI.27, rather than John in support. She also points to inseparable operation (Tanner 2001:40). However, the Father's specific characterisation as sovereign and generous giver remains relatively undeveloped.

a loving generosity on the part of the giver, as well as, especially in terms of the gift of authority, a certain primacy.

To this extent, giving characterises the giver as personal, lovingly generous and primary (Proposal 8(e): contrary to the disjunction between love and primacy implicit in Moltmann's account). Both love and primacy are underscored by the scale of the Father's giving in John: all traces back to the Father's giving, so that the scale characterises the Father as lavishly generous. By the same token, that he has all this to give characterises him as having extensive rights of possession: he is lord of much to give so much. Again, this primacy involved in giving re-inforces the patrocentricity in the Father-Son relationship.

It requires some emphasis that this giving Father does not exercise authority in some vicious sense, an authoritarian authority. The primacy the Father has as giver is strongly associated by the Gospel with his love and generosity. It is difficult, though, to see how the characterisation of loving generosity can remain unaltered if the primacy is denied.

It was observed that the giving motif with respect to the Father is comparatively under-represented in these theologians. This requires further comment. First, the stress on giving is not at all inconsistent with the presentation of filial derivation and what goes with that. Instead, it further supports it. Secondly, one plausible reason for the under-representation of giving language is the polemical setting of Athanasius and Hilary in particular, where giving had been used by Arian advocates to suggest ontological inferiority. Thirdly, the notions of the Father's

conjoined love and authority towards his Son are present. The question is one of degree. In this respect it is noteworthy that the theologian who most strongly stresses the loving character of trinitarian relations, Augustine, is the one who has the strongest account of gift in his trinitarian theology (admittedly over-focussed on the Spirit). Accordingly, the patristic emphasis on patrocentricity is borne out by the Gospel, but requires development in terms of the patrocentricity implied by the giving Father, with its fuller implications of a generous, gracious primacy.

9.3. Considerations Arising from the Giving Father

First, the pattern of the comprehensively giving Father who operates inseparably with his Son and Spirit stresses that the Father is properly called saviour. Salvation is not simply an achievement of Son, or Spirit, or both, which the Father passively accepts.

Secondly, on this pattern, the risk of egalitarian presentations of the Father-Son relation is an attenuation of the character of the Father. By denying the subordination of the Son relationally, the risk is that the kind of giving depicted by John (and the kind of filial derivation endorsed by these patristic theologians) distorts. The non-primary Father has, so to speak, less to give in the egalitarian version than the Son in the Incarnation claims to have received. To this extent, an egalitarian version could even risk, not so much a *deus absconditus*, but a *pater absconditus*. For the Son need receive nothing from him.

Thirdly, the risk of a *pater absconditus* is a *filius absconditus*. This is particularly evident with Jesus' claim to lordship. In the johannine account, Jesus

finally rests his claim to lordship on the giving of the Father. That giving, as we have seen, suggests a primacy for the Father. If, however, one denies the primacy of the Father, how, then, can the Father give all authority to his Son? The problem at this point, then, is how the reign of the Son can be legitimated on grounds other than the ones to which the Son himself appeals. In this respect, the final casualty of an egalitarian trinity immanently is the kingship of the Son economically. In this sense, Smail's original contention is indeed substantiated: the place of the Father will determine the nature of the gospel Christians proclaim.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: GRECO-ROMAN PHILOSOPHY AND MONOTHEISM

1.1. Plato's Inheritance

Several schools of thought constitute Plato's philosophical inheritance. As well as Pythagorean influence, two schools are of particular interest here.

First, there is the influence of the Ionian physicists and their quest for an underlying unitary explanation of the cosmos. Frede comments that the nature of their enterprise was such that one would be led to look not merely for ultimate material but the ultimate agent to form it.¹ This point seems well-made given the Ephesian Heraclitus' description of the cosmic process. The process itself can be depicted as fire, but this is a unitary process:

It is wise to hearken, not to me, but to my Word, and to confess that all things are one.²

This One can be identified with God,³ and, as Reason (*Logos*), it orders the process. In this respect Copleston's verdict that Heraclitus is 'pantheistic' seems justified.⁴

However, in terms of the categories of monotheism outlined above in chapter 2, such a God is, in a sense, exclusive as regards his being, for apparently nothing ultimately exists other than him. However, the impersonal pantheistic nature of this One makes the category of worship, seem irrelevant: worship of anything must finally

¹ Frede 1999b:47.

² Frag. 50.

³ Frag 2.

⁴ Copleston 1947 I:38.

reduce to worship of the One, although given the impersonal and ineluctable operation of the One, worship anyway might be regarded as pointless.

In respect of the category of relations, Heraclitus' universal *Logos* may be the governor of the cosmos, but as its immanent principle rather than a sovereign ruler who is personally distinct. Such a system is readily described as monist, and it is certainly arguable that monism ought to be distinguished from monotheism. However, to do so too readily here might obscure the fact that Heraclitus is prepared to call his One 'God'. Clearly terminology is not necessarily decisive, but it remains suggestive.

Secondly, Plato also, of course, found himself facing the arguments of Parmenides and the Eleatics, that change and becoming are illusory and that the Way of Truth was rather to acknowledge that there was one unchanging being, the One. Thus, like Heraclitus, the finished product is strongly monistic, but is reached by stressing Being at the expense of Becoming rather than, as in Heraclitus, Becoming rather than Being. Reality in Parmenidean thought was thus not what the senses disclosed, and this might be thought to favour a climate sympathetic to religious thought about the transcendent. Nevertheless, this might well be offset by the fact that, unlike Heraclitus, Parmenides does not appear to describe the One as 'God'.⁵

⁵ In Parmenides' poem Justice explains the ways of Opinion and Truth. There is a strong mythological element in the form of Parmenides' explanation. Yet the poem's content leads one away from seeing such figures as distinct entities.

1.2 Aristotle and the Unmoved Mover

Aristotle was described in chapter 2 above as having an ‘unintentional teleology’.⁶ *Metaphysics* Book Λ indicates how this ‘unintentional teleology’ comes about: there is, Aristotle claims, an unmoved mover.⁷ The perceived goodness of the unmoved mover induces those other entities to move. Hence Aristotle can remark: τὸ ὁρεκτόν καὶ τὸ νοητὸν κινεῖ οὐ κινούμενα.⁸ As an unmoved mover, God is pure actuality, without potentiality, and Aristotle sums up his theological reflections at this stage thus:

We hold, then, that God is a living being [ζῶον], eternal, most good; and therefore life [ζωή] and a continuous eternal existence [αἰὼν συνεχῆς καὶ αἰδῖος] belong to God; for that is what God is.⁹

However, Hankinson rightly stresses that this is unintentional teleology, for the unmoved mover seems oblivious of the entities striving to resemble him (or it) in his perfection: he thinks about himself alone.¹⁰ This is certainly consistent within Aristotle’s conceptions, for thinking of other entities would be to think of imperfect objects, since they are capable of change. Such is the argument in *Metaphysics* Λ ix 1074b26ff. Since there would be the potential to think only of the perfect, the perfection, or perfect actuality, of the unmoved would be diminished if it thought of an imperfect object.

Aristotle also himself seems to have wavered over the number of unmoved movers.¹¹ The crucial sections of *Metaphysics* Λ speak of one unmoved mover, but

⁶ Hankinson 1995:128.

⁷ Aristotle’s reasons for deducing an unmoved mover are, of course, controversial. But that step is not the issue here.

⁸ *Met* Λ vii 1072a26f.

⁹ *Met* Λ vii 1072b30f.

¹⁰ *Met* Λ vii 1072b20f. See also 1074b34.

¹¹ Copleston 1947 I:315f. J. Barnes 1995:101ff speaks insistently in the plural: primary substances, gods etc.

elsewhere more appear.¹² Aristotle does, though, address the number of unmoved movers in *Metaphysics* Λ viii 1073a14-1074b39. In this complex and involved passage it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Aristotle is suggesting both a plurality of unmoved movers (to account for the number of the heavenly spheres:1074a18ff) and also one supreme unmoved mover (1074a33-38). Postulating a hierarchy has the advantage of explaining how the independent movements caused by a plurality of unmoved movers may be harmonious, as Copleston observes.¹³ It is less easy to discern what makes the supreme unmoved mover supreme. The answer suggested by the text is its complete reality,¹⁴ but this is by no means free from difficulty since one might well have thought that any unmoved mover must be pure actuality. Nevertheless, given the emphasis on harmonious motion, Frede asserts that Aristotle ‘...does mean to talk about one particular being which governs the world.’¹⁵

1.3. Middle Platonism

J. Dillon cautions both against treating Middle Platonism merely as a precursor to Plotinus and against seeing this grouping as merely eclectic.¹⁶ However, this does not mean the Middle Platonists spoke with one theological voice, despite a common allegiance to the exposition and development of Plato.¹⁷ Several positions will be described.

¹² Notably *Physics* 258b11; 259a6ff; 259b28-31.

¹³ Copleston 1947 I:316.

¹⁴ *Metaphysics* Λ viii 1074a36f.

¹⁵ Frede 1999b:46. Plotinus canvasses the idea that Aristotle was undecided *Enneads* V.1.9. Athenagoras *Plea* 6 lists Aristotle as a monotheist philosopher.

¹⁶ Dillon 1977:xiiiif.

¹⁷ Copleston 1947 I:451.

First, there is Eudorus of Alexandria with a clearly articulated supreme principle ὁ ὑπεράνω θεός, or the One, the ultimate source of being.¹⁸ Eudorus, though, has a second One, or Monad, who can be called φως, an important metaphor in both platonising, gnostic and Christian accounts of 'emanation'. There is, however, an opposing principle, the Unlimited Dyad. Dillon construes the relationship between these three in terms of the Monad being Form and the Dyad Matter, with the Monad acting on the Dyad to form Ideas from which comes the material universe.¹⁹ Dillon comments on the monistic tendencies here and its fruitfulness for later neoplatonism.²⁰ For present purposes, one notes the terminology of God, and the supremacy of the Highest God, as well as his apparently utter transcendence.

Turning to Plutarch of Chaeroneia (fl 100 A.D.), unlike Eudorus, he maintains an unresolved dualism, having two fundamental principles, the One and the Unlimited Dyad. The nature of the One is to give form to the disorder of the Unlimited Dyad,²¹ providing a strong echo of features of the *Timaeus*. The One is God, true being, and directs all things, a providential government sharply contrasting with Aristotle's theology. Again, this God, very much in the platonic tradition, is eternal and unchanging.

The One does not relate to the world as creator *ex nihilo*. As in the *Timaeus*, there is a pre-existing disorder. Form or order is ultimately imposed on this through

¹⁸ Dated by Dillon 1977:115 to the 60s B.C. Eudorus represents, *inter alia*, a neo-pythagorean influence.

¹⁹ Dillon 1977:128. He conjectures Plato's *Philebus* 26E -30E may be source material for Eudorus: 1977:127.

²⁰ Dillon 1977:128.

²¹ Dillon 1977:199, quoting *Def. Or.* 428f.

an intermediary, the *Logos*.²² In fact, intermediaries feature significantly in Plutarch's thinking. He appears to see them as, so to speak, amphibians: like humans, they have emotions, and, like the gods, they have divine power.²³ Accordingly, they are to be revered.

Albinus (fl. 150 A.D.), the third representative of Middle Platonism, rings yet further changes on the enigmatic melodies of the *Timaeus*. He postulates a threefold hierarchy of being, strongly anticipating Plotinus. In ascending order, Soul, Mind and the Primal God. Since the object of thought for the Primal God is itself, Dillon sees here the influence of Aristotle's Unmoved Mover.²⁴ This Primal God is eternal, ineffable, wanting nothing, eternally and entirely perfect. Such a list of epithets stresses that the Primal God is both transcendent and, predictably within a platonic system, unchangingly perfect and immutable.

In terms of creation, Albinus appears to follow the *Timaeus*,²⁵ so that creation is not *ex nihilo* but wide scope remains for 'created' gods, or, rather in Albinus' terms, demons. The latter are present throughout the elements of the cosmos (with the possible exception of earth) 'in order that no part of the cosmos should be devoid of soul nor of a living being superior to mortal nature.'²⁶ Cosmic government is related to the demons, for Albinus goes on: 'and to these [sc. demons] are made subject all things beneath the Moon and upon the earth.'

²² Developed at length in *De Is.* where Osiris stands for the *Logos*.

²³ *Def. Or* 416c ff, quoted by Dillon 1977:216.

²⁴ Dillon 1977:283.

²⁵ Dillon 1977:286-8.

²⁶ Quoted by Dillon 1977:288.

Middle Platonism highlights several things here. The first is that, following the framework of the *Timaeus*, the deity is not distinguished as the uniquely eternal being while other beings are created *ex nihilo*. It is, though, true that only the One or God has unchanging continuity. It is not clear, however, that this is essentially personal continuity.

Secondly, exclusive worship is not apparently a major preoccupation. Plutarch countenances reverence for demons, while Albinus sees these supernatural beings as exercising seemingly lawful authority on earth. Naturally, these Middle Platonic demons are not necessarily to be invested with all the biblical connotations, but Augustine's testimony that the 'Platonists' accepted the practice of worshipping demons is very striking.²⁷

Thirdly, and very relevantly for consideration of patristic accounts of Father and Son, in Eudorus and Albinus we find what look very much like two levels of fully divine being, the Supreme or Primal God and beneath him a divine Mind. The relationship between the two is potentially highly significant, but perhaps the most sophisticated exposition of this in the platonic stream seems to come with Plotinus.

1.4. Plotinus and the One

Given the One's perfection and simplicity, Plotinus apparently feels some discomfort at why Mind is generated,²⁸ but explains it as 'circumradiation' (Mackenna's term), which is then illustrated in terms of light around the Sun, heat from fire, cold from snow and fragrance from a sweet-smelling substance. These

²⁷ *De Civ. Dei* Bk 8.12.

²⁸ *Enneads* V.1.6.

examples drive home how Mind may be ‘...produced from the Supreme but the Supreme unaltering.’²⁹

As with the relation of Soul and Mind, Mind is described as Image of its generator.³⁰ The generation does not occur in time,³¹ and Mind looks to or contemplates the One. The One, famously, transcends Being.³² However, the One is not like Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover: in its perfection it does not need even to contemplate itself,³³ indeed to do so would imply a duality of knower and known which would be impossible for the simplicity of the One.³⁴

With this in mind it is possible to consider something of the network of relationships in Plotinus’ system. Dillon helpfully comments³⁵ that this is more than vertical hierarchy of being. For there are also concentric aspects, by which one works from the outer ring of the sensible world to the inner world of Forms and ultimately to the One itself, a path not simply of vertical ascent but of inner penetration, found for example in *Enneads* VI.8.17 & 18.

1.5. The Cult of *Theos Hypsistos*

For Mitchell, ‘*Hypsistos* was one of the most widely worshipped gods of the eastern Mediterranean world.’³⁶ There are, however, difficulties in seeing this cult as completely uniform. Inscriptional evidence is interestingly varied in that some sites are dedicated to *Zeus Hypsistos*, which would suggest pagan derivation, but Mitchell

²⁹ *Enneads* V.1.6.

³⁰ *Enneads* V.1.7.

³¹ *Enneads* V.1.6.

³² *Enneads* V.1.10.

³³ *Enneads* V.3.13.

³⁴ *Enneads* V.3.10.

points out that these are largely in Greece itself and Macedonia, and adds that overall there are more dedications to *Theos Hypsistos* or *Hypsistos*.³⁷ For Kraabel, some of the inscriptions are of a clearly Jewish provenance,³⁸ but concludes from the overall evidence that ‘the epithet ὕψιστος, when it appears in Asia Minor, can never be taken, by itself, as proof that the text is Jewish.’³⁹ This sense of variety is heightened by Levinskaya’s observation that comparison of inscriptions between *Zeus Hypsistos* and *Theos Hypsistos* show a contrast, for the latter do not have anthropoid images of the god.⁴⁰ She adds that *hypsistos* was comparatively rarely used of named pagan gods such as Apollo,⁴¹ although Kraabel is doubtless right to note the aptness of the epithet for deities such as Zeus.⁴²

Notwithstanding this variety, the perception of some Patristic writers is that one can talk of ‘the Hypsistarians’.⁴³ Notably, Gregory of Nazianzen’s father was apparently an adherent and Gregory comments briefly on the cult’s beliefs in the funeral oration for his father:⁴⁴ Gregory describes the cult as combining ‘Greek error and legal imposture’ while escaping some parts of each.

For, on the one side, they reject idols and sacrifices, but reverence fire and lights; on the other, they observe the Sabbath and petty regulations as to certain meats, but despise circumcision. These lowly men call themselves Hypsistarii, and the Almighty is, so they say, the only object of their worship.

This depiction of the Hypsistarians as lying between Greek and Jewish positions receives some support from Cyril of Alexandria, but the latter strikingly also

³⁵ Dillon 1991:xcī.

³⁶ Mitchell 1999:99

³⁷ Mitchell 1999:100.

³⁸ He cites the Acmonia text with its citation of ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὕψιστος: Kraabel 1969:88.

³⁹ Kraabel 1969:91.

⁴⁰ Levinskaya 1996:87.

⁴¹ Levinskaya 1996:92.

⁴² Kraabel 1969:91.

⁴³ Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, and probably Epiphanius of Salamis.

⁴⁴ Greg Naz.*Or*18.5.

admits that the cultists accepted other gods, and Mitchell concludes from the Oenoanda oracular inscription that *Hypsistos* was a god 'known by many names.'⁴⁵

Several points may be made. First, the cultists are clearly not converts to full Judaism (especially if the polyonymous stance of the Oenoanda inscription is typical). Secondly, this need not preclude a substantial Jewish background for the title, as Levinskaya contends (the aniconic nature of many inscriptions is striking).⁴⁶ Thirdly, Mitchell may well be right to see syncretistic elements in the cult,⁴⁷ and this economically explains the perception that it lies between pagan Greek and Jewish thought. Nevertheless, this syncretism apparently has considerable variations within it. Fourthly, the association of light with divinity is interesting given the significance of light imagery both in pagan philosophical thought about God, and also in Christian explanations of the Father and Son.

⁴⁵ Mitchell 1999:91

⁴⁶ She refers both to inscriptional evidence and the usage of the LXX. Levinskaya 1996:95ff.

⁴⁷ Mitchell 1999:121.

APPENDIX 2: ORIGEN AND THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

Harl comments that a fundamental part of Origen's conception was that there was an intelligible order.⁴⁸ Naturally this is unsurprising in a platonising ambience, but Origen was clear the Scriptures themselves mandated this, especially 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.⁴⁹ To this basic framework one must add the viability of allegorical interpretation. Again, this is not simply adopted as an available hermeneutical technique of Alexandria (although Jews like Philo and the Hellenistic commentators on writers such as Homer and Hesiod practise the technique). For Origen a biblical mandate comes from texts like I Corinthians 9:9ff, 10:1ff and Ephesians 5:31ff,⁵⁰ not to mention Galatians 4:24ff. He also shares with his non-Christian setting the idea that an exegesis must be worthy of God.⁵¹

The spiritual meaning is the important one,⁵² and the literal meaning derives much of its value from the assertion of the spiritual truth. In consequence Origen is not committed to the complete historical accuracy of the bible,⁵³ although he is certainly not committed to seeing nothing as historical. Crouzel seems judicious in commenting that Origen has varying room for literal exegesis (consider his insistence on the real death of Jesus⁵⁴) and that he normally at least starts with literal exegesis.⁵⁵ The common thread of his varying spiritual exegesis, notably of the Old Testament, is that the Scriptures testify to and prophesy of, Christ.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ Harl 1958:368.

⁴⁹ Used to assert this notably in *AgC* VI.19 and 20, but elsewhere too.

⁵⁰ Cited in *AgC* IV.49.

⁵¹ Crouzel 1989:78.

⁵² Origen apparently operates a scheme of triple meaning in which various levels of meaning parallel his tripartite anthropology: literal meaning corresponds with body, moral with soul and spiritual with spirit. See Crouzel 1989:79.

⁵³ Note here *OFP* IV.19.

⁵⁴ *AgC* II.16.

⁵⁵ Crouzel 1989:61.

⁵⁶ Crouzel 1989:64.

In its time this scheme offered very considerable advantages. Criticisms of the barbarism of the Pentateuch could be repelled by the same techniques non-Christians employed with respect to Homer and Hesiod.⁵⁷ As against Marcionism, this allowed for the unity of the Testaments, while within the Christian community people could be left with their appropriate levels of meaning.

This interpretative method has, of course, also been subjected to trenchant criticism. Scalise speaks of ‘a loss of hermeneutical control’⁵⁸ while Kelly notes that Origen’s allegorical method is ‘...capable of almost infinite ramifications’.⁵⁹ Kelly risks over-statement. For, as observed above, Origen is concerned for a unity in the scriptures: they constitute a single ‘word’,⁶⁰ and focus on Christ:⁶¹ that will militate against a completely indefinite extension of meaning.

Nevertheless Origen provides very considerable extensions of meaning. It is worth pondering briefly why. Kelly helpfully distinguishes between typological and allegorical approaches. No doubt one may move readily from one to the other, but typology deals primarily with the correspondence between the Testaments, with events in the Old prefiguring the New.⁶² To that extent control is exerted by the events of the Incarnation, which tends to reinforce the significance of history in the sensible world.⁶³

⁵⁷ E.g. *AgC* IV.37-51.

⁵⁸ Scalise 1988:117,129.

⁵⁹ Kelly 1977:73.

⁶⁰ Crouzel 1989:70.

⁶¹ Compare *CJ* I.10. Nassif 1998:54 draws attention to the concern for inner unity.

⁶² Kelly 1977:71.

By contrast, a strong allegorical method treats the text ‘as a mere symbol, or allegory, of spiritual truths’⁶⁴ Such an approach tends to less hermeneutical control because what is symbolised may not necessarily be found within Scripture. Harl comments that Origen sees human language and events as having a ‘veiling’ quality,⁶⁵ perhaps an inevitable consequence given the strong allegorical technique.

Furthermore, such an approach may well take the New Testament itself as symbolising something beyond itself, while typology more normally stresses the New Testament itself as the fulfilment of what was previously presented as a type. Finally, while some New Testament passages may expressly seem to invoke allegory (e.g. Galatians 4:24ff), it does not follow that allegory may be legitimately invoked without express warrant within the text, unless one accepts the guiding rule that any exegesis must be worthy of God. The problem is, how does one know what is worthy of God within Origen’s framework, in which only the Son knows God.⁶⁶

A further problem develops over the truthfulness of God’s revelation. Trigg draws out this aspect of Origen’s thought from the homily on Jeremiah 20:7-12, which speaks of divine deception.⁶⁷ Noting that Origen sees deception as sometimes ethically acceptable,⁶⁸ he concludes ‘Origen considered deliberate deception a part of God’s strategy for winning back erring souls.’⁶⁹ The outstanding example is, perhaps, the warnings of hell and torment. These are uttered in the manner that wise parents

⁶³ As Kelly notes 1977:71.

⁶⁴ Kelly 1977:71.

⁶⁵ Harl 1958:141, 145 and 148. Cox Miller 1988:173 speaks of Origen’s awareness of the ‘abyss of revelation.’

⁶⁶ *AgC* VI.17.

⁶⁷ Trigg 1988:147. Referring to Homily on Jeremiah 20.

⁶⁸ Trigg 1988:155. The cases are those of the physician and the father.

⁶⁹ Trigg 1988:162.

threaten their children in order to move them to better behaviour.⁷⁰ The untruth is justified on the ground of the benevolence with which it is offered.⁷¹

Nevertheless, these two factors, the unrestrained use of allegory and the concept of the medicinal lie, do no little damage to the revelation that Christ brings. What we see of Christ, even using the allegorical method, may still, it seems, be a medicinal lie. In consequence our knowledge both of him and thus of his Father through him, and of their relationship risks becoming highly provisional and uncertain. This view of revelation in Origen tends to attenuate further the link between economic and immanent trinities.

⁷⁰ *AgC. V.* 14-16.

⁷¹ Trigg 1988:154.

APPENDIX 3: HILARY AND *DE TRINITATE*

3.1. Title

De Trinitate is the title attached by tradition to Hilary's great work. Some have felt it not entirely apt, suggesting an original like *De Fide*.⁷² After all, the work is as much a christological discussion as a trinitarian one,⁷³ and the Holy Spirit is comparatively absent from discussion.⁷⁴ It should be stressed that Hilary does indeed discuss the Holy Spirit in II.29-35,⁷⁵ suggesting a significant appropriated work for him (faith), and in a significant place.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the bulk of the work deals with the Son. One would have to add, though, that as a christological discussion the work would stand as inadequate in important respects. Thus while it is stressed that Jesus is indeed genuinely human and genuinely God, the authenticity of Jesus' human experiences is taken in a markedly docetic direction.⁷⁷

De Fide certainly is an apt suggestion at least in this sense, that Books I-III deal with an exposition of the baptismal faith.⁷⁸ It is, though, an exposition dealing largely with the relation between the divine Son and the Father. It is an exposition with an agenda in view, even though it may not be captive to that.

⁷² Harman 1973: 386. Cf Borchardt 1966:40.

⁷³ Galtier 1960: 86.

⁷⁴ Moingt 1968: 160 draws attention to German criticism of an earlier period on just this point, to the effect that Hilary did not grasp the personhood of the Spirit. Moingt himself 1968:167 disputes the strength of the criticism.

⁷⁵ One of the primary aims here is to ensure the distinction of the Spirit.

⁷⁶ For the significance of Books I-III see below.

⁷⁷ Hanson 1988b: 500-501 is understandably forceful about the docetic patterns: 'In effect he [sc. Hilary] concluded that at the very point where Christ's solidarity with humankind is most crucial, in his suffering, Christ was not really human.' This rightly poses the question but risks understating Hilary's insistence on genuine humanity, as well as Hilary's polemical setting. Before adjudicating on the docetic issue, one needs to ask what Hilary thought constituted authentic human experience, but this goes beyond the bounds of the present study.

3.2. Date and Unity of Composition

In terms of date of composition, Meijering contends that the entire work was composed in exile,⁷⁹ after, that is to say, 356, and as Arianism approached its apogee.⁸⁰ The significance of the date is that it heightens the likelihood of Hilary's interaction with Greek pro-Nicene theologians during composition, and also illuminates the importance of the work in the author's own understanding, placing it more alongside *De Synodis* and Hilary's response to the 'Blasphemia' of Sirmium 357.⁸¹ Suggestions have been made that the first three books, somewhat different in tone,⁸² were written perhaps earlier, so that the resulting work is in fact a composition of two distinct treatises.⁸³

Certainly there are repeated hints of exile in the completed work. There are also indications of a designed unity,⁸⁴ and Meijering judiciously observes that in the absence of 'decisive evidence' to the contrary, one should respect Hilary's own presentation of the work.⁸⁵ One important consideration here is whether there are structural fissures in the completed work that do suggest composition of two different works.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ Galtier 1960: 77.

⁷⁹ Meijering 1982: 10, following Simonetti.

⁸⁰ Dated by Figura and Doignon 2001: 11 ca. 360, not least because of the Council of Constantinople which attempted to suppress *ousia* and *hypostasis* terminology.

⁸¹ Figura and Doignon 2001: 27 note that Hilary objected to the proscription of the use of *homoousios* and *homoiousios*.

⁸² Allegedly less polemical: Galtier 1960: 36.

⁸³ E.g. Harman 1973: 387.

⁸⁴ Especially Hilary's outline of all 12 books in I.21-36, in which he represents the whole as composed according to a single scheme.

⁸⁵ Meijering 1982: 2.

⁸⁶ On the structure of *De Trinitate* see chapter 6 above.

APPENDIX 4: VIEWS ON ARIANISM AND HOMOIANISM IN CURRENT SCHOLARSHIP

Some recent scholarship on western theological history has preferred to employ the term Homoianism for a range of beliefs in the later 4th and 5th centuries that pro-Nicene contemporaries tended to designate as ‘Arian’. Hanson distinguishes this from a neo-Arianism associated with Eunomius and Aetius.⁸⁷ The two are said to have a somewhat different heart-beat. While both insist the Father is ingenerate, neo-Arianism’s watchword is said to be *heterousios*,⁸⁸ while Homoianism, at any rate in its western form, puts the Ariminum Creed as central,⁸⁹ with its claim that Father and Son are like ‘as the scriptures teach’.⁹⁰ On such a view, the Father was incomparable.⁹¹ Williams contends that such Homoianism was not extant simply because of the Gothic penetration,⁹² although that doubtless assisted. Rather, Ambrose’s difficulties in Milan suggest, notwithstanding his successes, Homoianism was tenacious. A central Homoian question was how could the Begotten and the Unbegotten be of one substance.⁹³ This is, of course, related to the question Augustine faces in *De Trinitate* V.4.

This means that Augustine in particular can plausibly be envisaged facing, amongst other things, a species of what he would define, fundamentally, as Arianism,⁹⁴ and what current scholarship would term western Homoianism, with an allegiance to the Council of Ariminum.

⁸⁷ Hanson 1988b:557. The further putative sub-division is between Latin and Greek Homoianism.

⁸⁸ Hanson 1988b:601 and 633.

⁸⁹ Compare Maximinus’s self-description in *Deb Max* 2.

⁹⁰ Williams 1995:11.

⁹¹ Hanson 1988b:563.

⁹² Williams 1995:69.

⁹³ Williams 1995:191.

⁹⁴ Given the definition in *Heresies* XLIX.

APPENDIX 5: HILARY AND ISAIAH 45:11-16

It is appropriate to mention Hilary's use of Isaiah 45:11-16, which is strongly featured in the latter parts of *De Trinitate* IV and V.⁹⁵ The critical portion is the end of verse 14, which Hilary renders (following the LXX) as:

Et adorabunt te, et in te depraecabuntur, quoniam in te est Deus, et non est Deus praeter te.

Hilary understands the verse as addressed by God to Israel's saviour,⁹⁶ her Messiah, who is for Hilary Jesus. It must be stressed that both the statements 'God is in you' and 'There is no God beside you' are addressed to Jesus the Son. This involves two exegetical moves. The first is to identify the initial addressee of *quoniam in te est Deus* as Jesus the Saviour.⁹⁷ The second is to understand *et non est Deus praeter te* as continuing the *quoniam* clause and not starting a new clause in which the addressee has changed to the God who has done the marvels mentioned in the preceding verses.

This suits Hilary's purposes admirably. The phrase 'God is in you' both stresses personal distinction and links to the Johannine language of indwelling. The phrase 'There is no God beside you' asserts the Son's divinity while upholding the principles of monotheism, a prominent theme of *De Trinitate* II-IV. Isaiah 45:14 thus provides Hilary with a single text where in-dwelling is linked to monotheism.

Hilary's approach, though, is vulnerable to the point that he has, albeit innocently, used highly tendentious, if not infelicitous, renderings drawn from the

⁹⁵ *DeT* IV.38-41, V.38.

⁹⁶ See *DeT* IV.39 '*Deus de Filio suo Deo...locutus*'.

⁹⁷ Not simply Cyrus or Jerusalem.

LXX. This seems justified. However, this exegesis of Isaiah 45:14 is not essential to his case.

APPENDIX 6: 'ABBA' LANGUAGE IN GALATIANS 4:6 AND ROMANS 8:15

6.1. Galatians 4:6

Context matters for Galatians 4:6. The significance of addressing God as 'abba' appears in verse 7. Paul opposes the notion of sonship to that of slavery, the point being that sonship means one inherits from God. Further, the slavery in view here is consistently to something other than God. Thus, in verse 3, the slavery is to the elemental spirits of the universe,⁹⁸ in verses 4 and 5 the slavery relates to the idea of being under the law, in verse 8 the slavery is to those who are not gods,⁹⁹ while verse 9 refers to the Galatians going back into slavery with the elemental spirits.¹⁰⁰

On this basis, one may indeed speak of a deliverance from slavery implicit in the 'abba' terminology. Yet, since the slavery in question is not to God, the use of 'abba' does not exclude the authority of the Father.¹⁰¹ That is not the issue.¹⁰²

6.2. Romans 8:15

Turning to Romans 8:15, the preceding context is the difference between life according to the flesh and according to the Spirit (verse 9). These are two mutually exclusive categories (verses 9 and 13) and verse 14 informs us that those led¹⁰³ by the Spirit are sons of God. The 'leading' terminology does not, perhaps, necessarily assert authority - lordship, in Moltmann's terms - since a guide may, for example lead

⁹⁸ ...τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου...

⁹⁹ ...ἐδουλεύσατε τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὐσιν θεοῖς.

¹⁰⁰ ...στοιχεῖα...

¹⁰¹ Thus Longenecker 1990:175 is content to see the term denoting the intimacy of a filial relationship as opposed to being under the law, yet is silent on whether this precludes paternal authority.

¹⁰² Although Martyn 1997:392 sees Gal 4:6 as echoing the acclamation of baptizands and, given the mix of Greek and Aramaic terms, having a two-fold sense: God is the absolute - and thus absolutely liberating- master, and God is the one whose care is without limit.

an army without being ‘in charge’ of it. On the other hand, the leading terminology is consistent with authority and does not exclude it.

The problem with life according to the flesh is outlined earlier in verses 5-8. The minds¹⁰⁴ of those living according to the flesh are set on the things of the flesh (verse 5), and such an orientation of mind¹⁰⁵ is death while an orientation of the Spirit is life and peace (verse 6). Verses 7 and 8 then state that the orientation to the flesh is enmity to God, does not obey God’s law, indeed cannot, and cannot please God. Disobedience and inability therefore mark the life according to the flesh.¹⁰⁶ This is not slavery in precisely the same terms as Galatians 4 envisages, but does suggest being in the power of another. This is re-inforced by the language of ‘capture’ found in Romans 7:23.

In this sense the life of a son is life not captivated and enslaved by the law of sin and death and by the orientation of disobedience in the flesh. Indeed, since life in the flesh is associated with inveterate disobedience, life in the Spirit might plausibly be associated with obedience. Hence the contrast in verse 15 between a spirit of slavery and a spirit of sonship is not the contrast between two views of God, one authoritarian but not intimate (the spirit of slavery) and one intimate but excluding authority (the spirit of sonship). For an authoritarian but not intimate view of God has not been in view throughout the passage. The only strongly marked appearance of an authority concept has been in the context of the disobedience of the life of the flesh.

¹⁰³ ἄγονται.

¹⁰⁴ Paul uses the φρονεῖν group which, as Moo states 1996:487, tends to deal not just with mental process but includes the ‘general direction of the will’ and our affections.

¹⁰⁵ τὸ...φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς... Moo uses the term ‘mind-set’ (Moo 1996:487ff).

¹⁰⁶ Moo 1996:489.

Exclusion of authority is present, but in the sense of refusing it improperly, something Paul is hardly recommending.

The succeeding context also does not demand a meaning excluding authority for 'abba' in 8:15. The theme that Paul draws out of sonship is again inheritance (verse 17) and consequent glorification. The consequence pastorally that Moo envisages is the re-assurance that comes from being son.¹⁰⁷ Again, this is consistent with intimacy but does not demand the sense excluding authority.

Therefore, the 'abba' terms of Romans 8:16 and Galatians 4:6 reflect the themes of inheritance and bondage, but in neither case is the bondage one to God. The adoptive sonship in view does not, then, demand that 'abba' terms reflect an intimate familiarity that precludes paternal authority.

¹⁰⁷ Moo 1996:503.

APPENDIX 7: AUGUSTINE *DE TRINITATE* I.7

The Latin runs:

Omnes quos legere potui qui ante me scripserunt De Trinitate quae Deus est, divinorum Librorum veterum et novorum catholici tractatores, hoc intenderunt secundum Scripturas docere, quod Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus unius eiusdemque substantiae inseparabili aequalitate divinam insinuent unitatem, ideoque non sint tres dii sed unus Deus, quamvis Pater Filium genuerit, et ideo Filius non sit qui Pater est; Filiusque a Patre sit genitus, et ideo Pater non sit qui Filius est; Spiritusque Sanctus nec Pater sit nec Filius, sed tantum Patris et Filii Spiritus, Patri et Filio etiam ipse coequalis et ad Trinitatis pertinens unitatem. Non tamen eandem Trinitatem natam de virgine Maria et sub Pontio Pilato crucifixam et sepultam tertio die resurrexisse et in caelum ascendisse, sed tantummodo Filium. Nec eandem Trinitatem descendisse in specie columbae super Iesum baptizatum, aut die Pentecostes post ascensionem Domini sonitu facto de caelo quasi ferretur flatus vehemens et linguis divisis velut ignis sedisse super unumquemque eorum, sed tantummodo Spiritum Sanctum. Nec eandem Trinitatem dixisse de caelo: Tu es Filius meus, sive cum baptizatus est a Iohanne sive in monte quando cum illo erant tres discipuli, aut quando sonuit vox dicens: Et clarificavi et iterum clarificabo, sed tantummodo Patris vocem fuisse ad Filium factam quamvis Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus sicut inseparabiles sunt, ita inseparabiliter operentur. Haec et mea fides est, quando haec est catholica fides.

APPENDIX 8: TRUE AND FALSE SONSHIP IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

It is helpful to contrast true and false sonship in John. John 8 provides a useful example of this in the intense and hostile confrontation between Jesus and pseudo-believers.¹⁰⁸ The pseudo-believers of 8:31-59 make two sonship claims, that they are children of Abraham (8:39) and children of God (8:42). Jesus argues, of course, that both these claims are false.

Children of Abraham do 'the works of Abraham' (8:39). Abraham, though, did not try to kill the one who speaks the truth (8:40), which they do. The falsity of the sonship claim, then, is built on dissimilarity of action. Parallel reasoning is further employed to show they are not children of God either (8:42). If they were children of God they would love Jesus. Again this would be a case of similarity, for the Father loves the Son (e.g. 3:35).

Instead a different sonship is established in 8:44. The comment 'you are from your father the devil'¹⁰⁹ is put in parallel with 'you want to do the desires of your father'. These desires are further explained in terms of life-taking/killing and lying, the very reverse of Father, Son and Spirit who are joined to giving life and speaking truth.¹¹⁰ This forms an apt corollary to the earlier denial of divine or Abrahamic fatherhood. There, dissimilarity disproved the claim, but here similarity proves a different paternity.

¹⁰⁸ 'Pseudo-believers' because they do not believe Jesus is the Son, as the attempt to stone him shows.

¹⁰⁹ Taking τοῦ διαβόλου from ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ διαβόλου as appositional.

It is pertinent here to ask whether this similarity is one simply of shared values between, so to speak, people who agree, or whether something further is intended. At this point it is perhaps worth recalling that the devil also features in the Gospel's analysis of Judas. Judas is himself portrayed as a devil (διάβολος: 6:70), whom Satan enters (13:27), and into whose heart Satan has put the wish to betray Jesus (13:2). This suggests some measure of sovereignty over Judas. Carson comments (of 6:70):

The supreme adversary ... of God so operates behind failing human beings that his malice becomes theirs.¹¹¹

This notion of control is supported and generalised beyond Judas by the depiction of the devil as 'the ruler of the world' (12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The devil presents a claim to an alternative cosmic monarchy. Clearly, the alternative monarchy is doomed to failure - its ruler is driven out (12:31), has no power over Jesus (14:30) and is judged (16:11). Even so, it means one can put the johannine choice in terms of which kingdom one belongs to - the ruler of the world's (doomed to fail) or God's (which brings life). There is, of course, a tragedy in the cry 'we have no king but Caesar' (19:15), rather than no king but God. But 'the world', emblematised in this instance by the Jewish authorities, implicitly concedes it is under authority.

In this way, diabolic fatherhood suggests paternal sovereignty. This is not to preclude willing participation in diabolic values (the terms of 8:44 suggest this too), but the paternal relation surpasses this.

¹¹⁰ Witherington remarks 1995:178 that the devil is the evil counterpart of Jesus. This counterpart point can be extended to the other Persons, who share Jesus' characteristics.

¹¹¹ Carson 1991:304.

This further suggests that true sonship is marked, *inter alia*, by filial obedience. This is manifested towards the devil by the world, and towards the Father by the Son. This would only be expected within a milieu so heavily influenced by Old Testament norms, in which fatherhood carried authority.

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